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goal! Weekly

Season 5: Issue 1 Monday 23rd February 2009

Photo courtesy of the Les Shorrock Collection

ROY HAY'S BLAST FROM THE PAST

VPL CLUB BY CLUB SEASON PREVIEW

CRAIG MACKENZIE AT LARGE

CELEBRATION OF A FEDERATION!

FOOTBALL VICTORIA REACHES 125 YEAR MILESTONE

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goal! Weekly

FOOTBALL FEDERATION VICTORIA

I said "captain!", I said "what!" : Under bright blue Melbourne skies the respective captains of the VPL and WPL came together for a historic shoot during the week at Bob Jane Stadium. The occassion marks the 125th football season of elite competition to be contested in Victoria. Goal! Weekly wishes all teams the best of luck as they embark on a monumental season campaign.

Photo by Daniel Flis

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Front Cover
John Gardiner holds the 1981 Dockerty Cup. Photo: Les Shorrock collection. Deakin University Library.

goal! Weekly

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MAJOR MILESTONE!

Celebrating Victorian Football History

VSF Board in the 1968. Left to right, Milivoje Pavlovic (JUST), C D Harris, John Gorton (Wilhelmina), John Oliphant, Andy Kun (Melbourne Hungaria), Theo Marmaras (South Melbourne), Michael Weinstein (Hakoah), Maria Biewer??, G T Edgar (Secretary), Gianni Castellini (Juventus), possibly G Papadopoulos or D Melidonis ? (Hellas), Enver Begovic (Croatia), John Barclay. Assistance with the identification of the people in the photograph would be appreciated. Photo: Les Shorrock collection. Deakin University Library.

People have birth certificates these days, which enables them to celebrate birthdays. If you are the custodian of football in Victoria it is a little harder to determine when the game began and what event should be celebrated.

Recent research has turned up small-sided games of football played for monetary prizes way back in the middle of the nineteenth century around the time Australian Rules was born. These were often advertised as English football. The first interstate games between Victoria and New South Wales of British Association football took place in 1883 and there were several clubs playing in Melbourne that year. Then on 28 February 1884 there was a meeting at Young and Jackson's Hotel in Melbourne to set up what was described as the Anglo-Australian club, and that is what the Football Federation of Victoria decided to commemorate in 2009.

The Argus reported: 'Over 30 gentlemen were present. Mr W Niven occupied the chair and stated the object of the meeting. In order to test whether the game would be popular or not here, it would be best to form a club. On the motion of C Kier, seconded by Mr F Lowe, it was decided that a club be formed to play under the British Association rules. It was resolved that the club be called the Anglo-Australian.

The following gentlemen were elected as temporary office bearers—Captain, C Kier, vice-captain F Lowe, secretary and treasurer J C Teare and committee, Messrs Smith, Buchanan, Niven, Brough and Keef.'

Around 80 players had been in action the previous year and it was expected that this would be soon exceeded with eight new clubs in prospect and another in Ballarat. Dr Beaney, a Melbourne doctor, donated £500 towards the funds to support sending a team to England to play. The tour to England did not eventuate, but that year the Richmond and Carlton clubs went to Geelong and played a match to promote the game there.

The terrible depression of the 1890s had a severe impact on all sports and it is likely that not much football was played in these years. Certainly it seems to have disappeared from the newspapers of the day.

In 1909 the game was revived with a new group of clubs forming a league and Harry Dockerty presented the Cup which took his name and became the knock-out trophy for Victorian football for the best part of a hundred years. The Victorians became part of the Commonwealth Football Association in 1911 and the game grew until the outbreak of the First World War.

A new wave of migration revived the game in the aftermath of the war and Soccer matches in Victoria resumed in 1919 with a new record attendance being established in a second-round Dockerty Cup match between Northumberland and Durhams and Melbourne Thistle at Middle Park on 3 July 1920. The First Division of the League now had twelve teams with matches being played at Middle Park and reserve games at Spotswood. A host of new clubs was formed including Box Hill (1922), Yallourn (1923), Coburg (1918), Heidelberg (1925), Brighton (1924), South Yarra (1928) and Hakoah (1927). So by the mid-1920s the game was firmly established though still as largely a participatory sport and it survived a big split in 1927 and another depression after the Wall Street crash in 1929.

After the Second World War the sport was transformed by migration into a semi-professional spectator sport. The Victorian Soccer Federation succeeded the Victorian Amateur Soccer Football Association after a tense struggle from 1960 to 1962. The VSF was responsible for the game until it was replaced in turn by the Football Federation of Victoria, the current custodian, and the inheritor of a much longer history than most people realise.

By Roy Hay

Photo: Les Shorrock Collection

LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

Well its finally back, dust off that winter coat and pull out the pumpkin seeds because the Victorian Premier league is about it kick off its 2009 season.

This season already promises to be an eventful one, two teams joining the league are no strangers at all. Dandenong Thunder and Sunshine Georgies will prove to be tough sides to beat, especially in front of their faithful supporters.

With the league cutting down to just 12 teams, predicting potential champions and relegation candidates are just that more harder, but here are my round 1 previews and predictions.

RICHMOND V WHITTLESEA

Fri 27th Feb 8:30pm, Kevin Bartlett Reserve.

Both teams will be looking to improve on disappointing seasons last year. Richmond set the season's pace early on, only to falter at the business end of the season. Whittlesea experienced relegation and then promotion within the matter of weeks, only the departure of the A.I.S ensured the Zebra's survival. Richmond playing at home settles this tie for me. **HOME WIN.**

Last 5 Meetings: Rich 1-0 Whitt (2008), Whitt 2-1 Rich (2008), Whitt 2-0 Rich (2007), Rich 3-1 Whitt (2007), Whitt 0-5 Rich (2006)

OAKLEIGH V HEIDELBERG

Fri 27th Feb 8:30pm, Jack Edwards Reserve

Oakleigh and Heidelberg will look to get an early three points over their fierce rivals in this opening round blockbuster. Oakleigh have had the wood over the Berger's in recent times, with Heidelberg unable to register a single goal against the Cannons since eliminating them from the 2006 Finals series. I can see these teams cancelling each other out. **SCORE DRAW**

Last 5 Meetings: Heid 0-0 Oak (2008), Oak 0-0 Heid (2008), Oak 6-0 Heid (2007), Heid 0-4 Oak (2007) Oak 0-1 Heid (2006 Finals)

PRESTON V MELBOURNE KNIGHTS:

Sun 1st Mar 5:00pm, BT Connor Reserve

Sunday kicks off with a mouth-watering match up between the two teams everyone loves to hate. The Lions won't need a second invitation, to inflict misery on the Knights supporters who are still licking their wounds after seeing their team lost the final in heartbreaking circumstances in last season's final. The Knights will be looking to go one step further this season. **AWAY WIN**

Last 5 Meetings: Knights 1-0 Preston (2008) Preston 1-1 Knights (2008) Preston 2-1 Knights (2007 Finals) Preston 1-0 Knights (2007 Finals), Preston 2-0 Knights (2007).

GREEN GULLY V SUNSHINE

Sun 1st Mar 5:00pm, Green Gully Reserve.

Sunshine have bounced straight back up into the Premier League, and now meet their bitter rivals Green Gully in this Round One showdown. A bumper crowd is expected at Green Gully Reserve to witness what should be an entertaining match up. **SCORE DRAW.**

Last 5 Meetings: Gully 1-1 Sun (07), Sun 0-2 Gully (07), Gully 1-2 Sun (06), Sun 2-2 Gully (06), Sun 0-0 Gully (05)

HUME CITY V ALTONA MAGIC

Sun 1st Mar 5:00pm, TBA

Reigning champions Altona Magic have been drawn a tough away to a strong looking Hume City side. Hume have bolstered their squad with plenty big name signings and will be looking to test their credentials, However beating Altona is easier said then done. **AWAY WIN**

Last 5 Meetings: Altona 4-1 Hume (08), Hume 1-2 Altona (08), No other meetings.

SOUTH MELBOURNE V DANENONG THUNDER

Sun 1st Mar 6:00pm, Bob Jane Stadium.

South Melbourne welcomes newcomers Dandenong Thunder to Bob Jane Stadium to wrap up round 1. Dandenong have been the talk of the town since gaining promotion, but it's time for the football to do the talking, a result against South will send some early messages. South Melbourne on the other hand will be looking to improve on last years disappointing season and challenge for silverware in what is a milestone for the club. **SCORELESS DRAW.**

Last 5 Meetings: No Previous Meetings.

For those who like a flutter on the English betting sites, my outside bet would be Sunshine upsetting Green Gully at home. Remember bet responsibly.

By Andrew Fisher

Kiss of Death

ROUND ONE FIXTURES

Richmond Eagles
v
Whittlesea Zebras
Kevin Bartlett Res
Fri 27 Feb KO 8:30PM

Oakleigh Cannons
v
Heidelberg Utd
Jack Edwards Res
Fri 27 Feb KO 8:30PM

Hume City
v
Altona Magic
Broadmeadows Valley Park
Sun 1 Mar KO 4:00PM

Preston Lions
v
Melbourne Knights
BT Connor Reserve
Sun 1 Mar KO 5:00PM

Green Gully Cavaliers
v
Sunshine Georgies
Green Gully Reserve
Sun 1 Mar KO 5:00PM

South Melbourne
v
Dandenong Thunder
Bob Jane Stadium
Sun 1 Mar KO 6:00PM

FOXTEL CUP FINAL STANDINGS 2008

		P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PT
1	Green Gully Cavaliers	26	15	8	3	41	17	24	53
2	Melbourne Knights	26	14	10	2	47	25	22	52
3	Altona Magic	26	13	8	5	44	29	15	47
4	Heidelberg Utd	26	11	9	6	41	30	11	42
5	Richmond	26	11	7	8	57	35	22	40
6	Preston Lions	26	12	3	11	37	46	-9	39
7	Oakleigh Cannons	26	10	7	9	28	24	4	37
8	A.I.S	26	10	6	10	41	35	6	36
9	South Melbourne	26	10	4	12	35	32	3	34
10	Coburg Utd	26	9	4	13	29	40	-11	31
11	Whittlesea Zebras	26	7	9	10	31	33	-2	30
12	Western Suburbs	26	5	7	14	23	42	-19	22
13	Fawkner Blues	26	6	3	17	22	59	-37	21
14	Frankston Pines	26	4	5	17	19	48	-29	17

2008 TOP SIX SERIES

QUALIFYING FINAL
Green Gully 1 V Melbourne Knights 1
Knights win 5-6 on pens

1st ELIMINATION FINAL
Altona Magic 2 V Preston Lions 1

2nd ELIMINATION FINAL
Heidelberg United 2 V Richmond Eagles 1

MAJOR SEMI-FINAL
Melbourne Knights 1 V Altona Magic 1
Magic win 4-3 on pens

MINOR SEMI-FINAL
Green Gully 0 V Heidelberg United 2

Preliminary Final
Heidelberg United 1 V Melbourne Knights 2

GRAND FINAL
Altona Magic 1 V Melbourne Knights 0

BACK TO BACK FOR MAGIC?

Another Potential Dynasty Awaits Ahead

ALTONA MAGIC

From hunting to being hunted. That's the reality of the situation the Altona Magic face in season 2009.

After clinching their first championship in eleven years, the Magic will not only have the pressure of retaining their own crown, but having eleven teams hunting them down to claim Victorian football's richest prize. In addition, history has not been kind in recent years to the reigning champions who have been hunted down in their quest of back-to-back titles. In 2007, South Melbourne failed to make the finals, whilst a resurgent Preston qualified for last years finals series at the eleventh hour, but ironically bowed out to the Magic in the elimination final.

Despite the pressure, the Magic should be quietly confident that a combination of stability and hunger will mount a serious challenge for back-to-back championships and reverse the recent troubles clubs have had defending their title.

Unlike other clubs during the off season, Altona have been able to retain the bulk of their talent both on and off the pitch. With unconditional support and backing from club President Milissa Fischer, the Magic have retained the services of coach Vlado Tortevski, coupled with all their assistant coaches and staff. On the pitch, the Magic have retained the bulk of their championship winning team, with only three signings added to the squad, far different circumstances from last season where Tortevski added nine players onto the team roster.

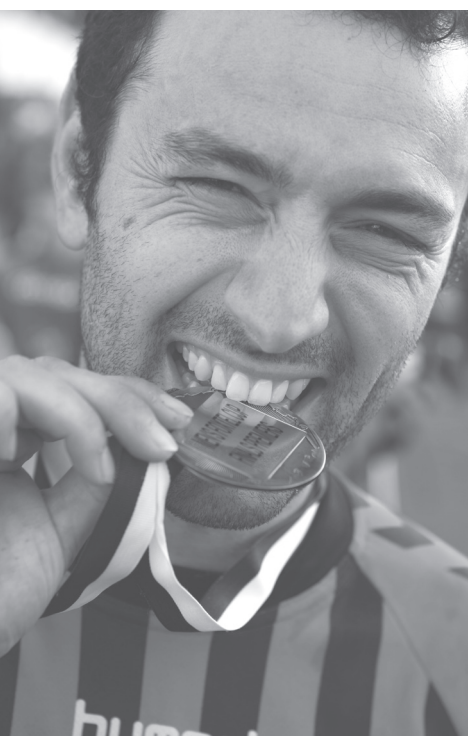
Coupled with team stability, Tortevski has not hided the fact his squad are even hungrier for success now that the Magic have tasted it. Conscious of championship hangovers, the Magic have adopted a zero complacency and tolerance attitude throughout the preseason, with players fully aware that competition in the starting eleven has never been harder with even more depth in the squad and the club yet to lose a pre season game in the lead up to the season proper.

One noticeable change for Altona will be the departure of their long serving full back and captain Stiven Mrkela who departed for South Melbourne during the off season. Carl Recchia has been given the captains armband, whilst defender Steve Laurie named his deputy. Aside from Mrkela, the Magic have lost the services of winger Agim Sherifovski (retired), whilst last year's signings of Todd McSorley and Esala Masi have left the club and ventured interstate to Adelaide and Brisbane respectively, but yet to find new homes.

Replacing the experienced trio for the Magic is youngster Kliment Traseski from the Victorian Institute of Sport, coupled with Frankson Pines' leading goalscorer last season Adam Fadljevic and experienced forward Tony Saric who made the short trip across from Altona City. Saric will be a handy addition to the experienced Magic forwards of Michael Curcija, Henry Fa'arodo and Pece Cergovski who scored over thirty goals between them last season.

Stability and experience will also lead the way for the Magic in midfield and defence in 2009. With the likes of dual-winning championship player Pece Siveski, former gold medallist Doug Mladenovic, and the likes of Carl Recchia, Steve Laurie and Con Anthopoulos having vast NSL and A-League experience respectively, there is no doubt that the Magic will definitely be in the mix at the business end of the season. Only time will tell if the champions will find themselves in the same predicament recent teams have experienced defending their title, or whether the Magic can begin to create their own dynasty and match the feats of their successful era in the mid nineties.

Champagne football was the order of the day at Paisley Park in 2008. Can they pull another rabbit out of the hat in 2009?



The taste of victory: Con Anthopoulos gets his teeth stuck into a chocolate VPL winner's medal.

President Melissa Fischer-Massa will be backing her troops all the way in VPL Version CXXV.

FAST FACTS

Formed 1975

Ground Address
Paisley Park Soccer Complex
Altona Mel:55-C5

VPL Championships
4 (2008,1997, 1996, 1995)

President Melissa Fischer-Massa
Coach Vlado Tortevski
Captain Doug Mladenovic

Finished last season
Champions

Top Scorer in 08
Michael Curcija 16 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes
Henry Fa'arado 29 votes

Top Six Series

Squad 2009
36. Bojo Jevdjevic (GK)
1. Nickola Reganovic (GK)
4. Steve Laurie (VC)
5. Doug Mladenovic (C)
6. Con Anthopoulos
7. Henry Fa'arodo
8. Carl Recchia
9. Michael Curcija
10. Pece Siveski
11. Kliment Traseski (VIS)
12. Adam Fadljevic (Frankston Pines)
14. Pece Cergovski
17. Phillip Riccobene
18. Tony Saric (Altona City)
19 Slave Bozinovski
23.Nicholas Kalmar

Departures:
Stiven Mrkela (South Melbourne)
Agim Sherifovski (retired)
Todd McSorley (Adelaide, no club)
Esala Masi (Brisbane, no club)

By Simon McCuskey

Photos by Brett Robson

GREEN GULLY CAVALIERS

GREEN MACHINE PREPARES FOR LIFE AFTER DOBBO

Winton Appointed To Fill Big Shoes

The Ian Dobson era for Green Gully may have just come to an end, and after nearly 10 years of service and 4 Victorian Premier League titles to show for it, the Green Gully Soccer Club were faced with a major decision on its hands. Who will coach the Cavaliers in 2009 and beyond?

The Victorian Premier League is notorious for hiring and firing the same coaches each year, the only change being the shorter time frame for between hiring and firing. With Ian Dobson moving away from State Level coaching and an eye on A-League coaching availability, the pool of experienced and proven Victorian coaches is more like a small pond. Victorian coach of the year Chris Taylor had his time at Green Gully prior to Ian Dobson's arrival, and left on a sour note, with Gully supporters petitioning his departure from the club.

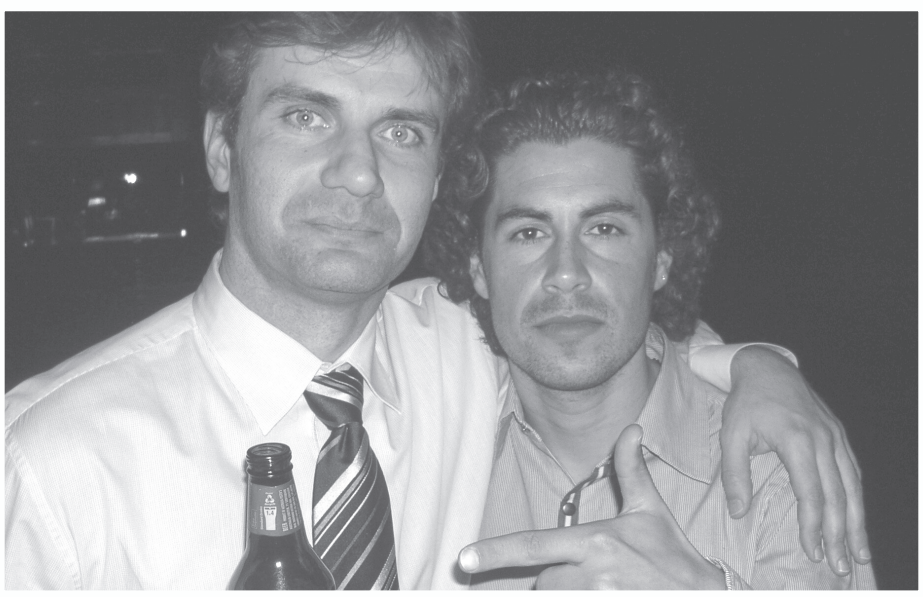
The left field choices for Gully management, either look interstate, and choice with much risk in itself, or move to break the vicious cycle of the VPL coaching (not so) merry-go-round. Enter David Winton. A former stand-in Essendon Royals coach, who spared that club from relegation on two ocassions when the first choice coach had fallen out with Royals club management, two year prior applied for a vacant Green Gully Under 21's coaching job. Appointed 6 weeks prior to the Under 21's season, and faced with a lack of training grounds due to drought, Gully management looked to the 2008 season as rebuilding year for the Under 21's, putting a 18 year old age limit on the Under 21 squad.

David Winton was not fazed by his challenge, a brought a fresh new coaching philosophy to the club.

"In Dutch coaching circles, there is a saying - we used to send our players running through the woods during pre-season, and all we got were players good at running through the woods..." Winton is a firm believer in fitness training relevant to movement on a soccer pitch, instead of the common "run until you a sick" mentality at most Victorian clubs.

As it turned out, Gully's young Under 21 outfit coached by David Winton alongside loyal Team Manager Tom Cutujar, won the Under 21 championship by 7 points ahead of their nearest challenger, the Victorian Institute of Sport, who Gully defeated twice during the season.

Sharp-shooter Joel Nikolic will be looking to continue where he left off last season and be profilic yet again.



Stalwarts Dean Fak and Andy Vargas will be pointing the way for the Green Gully Cavaliers this year.

David Winton was called up for an interview to the Green Gully board to discuss the availability of the seniors role, and after a 2 hour long discussion had begun to win over the confidence of management and was ultimately awarded the role of seniors coach. Two months of pre-season with David Winton as coach and Nick Radecki as Assistant coach, had both challenged and engaged the playing roster of the Cavaliers. The club departed company with forwards Campbell Banks, Koce Delev and Brazilian Pedro Oliveria. In their place, come league leading goalscorer Pablo Cardozo and Englishman Daniel White.

Coach David Winton faces a big task to win over the club's members and supporters, but can take some morale with the results of pre-season games; Green Gully 2 Melbourne Knights 2 Green Gully 6 Westgate 1 Green Gully 3 Whittlesea Zebras 0 Melbourne Knights 1 Green Gully 2

FAST FACTS

Formed 1955

Ground Address
Green Gully Reserve
Green Gully
Mel: 14 E8

VPL Championships
7 (2005, 2003, 2000, 1999, 1983, 1982, 1981)

President Charle Farrugia
Coach Dave Winton
Captain Dean Fak

Finished last season 1st on table (Eliminated in Minor Semi Final after 2-0 to heidelberg United)

Top Scorer in 08
Joel Nikolic 12 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes
Jeff Fleming 30 votes (equal 2nd)

Squad 2009
Steve Tilovski (GK)
John Adam
Aziz Behic
Steve Burton
Kole Delev
Dean Fak
Jeffrey Fleming
Kristian Ivesic
Mile Medjedovic
Joel Nikolic
Patrick N'Dongo (GK)
Ryan Ollerton
Matthew Sanders
Andy Vargas
Cameron Drake
Daniel White
Pablo Cardozo (from Richmond Eagles)
Diego Ferrera

First up, Green Gully tackle traditional rivals Sunshine Georgies, in round one of the VPL, Sunday March 01, 5pm at Green Gully Reserve.

In other club news, Gully supporters can also look forward to the new Green Gully Soccer Show, going to air Saturday Feb 28, at 10:30am. The Green Gully Soccer Club have hired the production company of the former FFV Soccer Show, and will bring highlights to air a week quicker than previous years, aswell as recruiting Simon McCusky from the FFV Soccer Show to back up commentator Ian Burke.

By Markian Jaworsky
Photos by Peter Kakalias

HOT AUGUST KNIGHTS AHEAD?

Taylor's Troops Ready To Rock Again

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS

The Melbourne Knights will be looking to go that one step further after finishing second and third in the past two seasons respectfully.

After succumbing to a devastating defeat in last season's grand final, the 2009 season is an opportunity to brush away the bitterness of a final's loss and start over.

The Knights have had a mini makeover in the off-season, and there have been plenty of notable changes down at Somers Street.

Top goal scorer Andrew Barisic has stuck a deal with Gold Coast, whilst Tomislav Milardovic, Ivan Franjic and Dario Matkovic have found new clubs in the league. Loyal servant Joe Spiteri has hung up his boots at Knights stadium and James Timmons has returned home.

Although some big names have departed, the Knights have managed to retain several key players. Alex Kiratzoglou, Jamie Cumming, Matt Grbesa, Savas Ozdemier, Ante Loncaric and Cameron Watson have all committed to the club, whilst Craig Elvin has shown his tremendous loyalty to the club and will once again don the captain's armband.

To add to this Mate Duganzdic has returned from his spell with Croatian side Dinamo Zagreb, and the youngster will again be looking to set the VPL alight. Sharpshooter Joshua Groenewold has signed from Heidelberg, who will have big shoes to fill in the strikers department left by Barisic and Spiteri. The Knights are also poised to finalise a deal which will see Frank Lagana sign at Knights Stadium, and a couple of overseas imports join the squad.

The Knight's will definitely be a competitive side again this season, as they continue their quest for some well overdue silverware. Fans expectations will again be sky high, and the pressure will be on Coach Chris Taylor to lead the side to Glory.

The season kick's off for the Knights with an away trip to rivals Preston Lions. The match will be played at BT Connor Reserve, Sunday 1st Match 5:00pm. Knights will play their first home game the following week when they take on Richmond, Sunday 8th March 5:00pm.

The Dynamic Duo: The strike partnership of Joe Spiteri and Andrew Baresic nearly returned top honours last season. Can they reproduce the scintillating form that helped the Knights tear many defences apart last season?

Craig Elvin shows the anguish after narrowly losing in last year's grand final.

FAST FACTS

Formed 1953

Ground Address
Knights Stadium
Somers Street, Sunshine
Mel: 27 A6

VPL Championships
3 (1979, 1978, 1968)

President Matt Tomas
Coach Chris Taylor
Captain TBC

Finished last season 2nd

Top Scorer in 08
Andrew Baresic 18 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes
Craig Elvin 28 votes (5th)

Squad 2009

Knights coach Chris Taylor

By Andrew Fisher

Photos by Steve Starek

HEIDELBERG UNITED

BERGERS SET TO SIZZLE

Katsakis Looks To "Go One Better"

Heidelberg goes into the 2009 VPL season looking to "go one better" after making the Preliminary final of the 2008 competition. Coach George Katsakis and his squad are hopeful of going all the way in 2009 in an attempt to lift the club to its first VPL title since 2001.

Led by its inspirational skipper, Tony Ouliaris and with reigning VPL Gold Medallist Graham Hockless calling the shots in midfield, Heidelberg in 2009 will not lack for creativity in the middle of the park. Several new signings will give the squad a multiple of attacking options, and the defence will be bolstered by the imminent return of Nevan Antic, a 2008 recruit returning from a knee injury.

The club has been busy in the off-season with several new faces likely in the starting line-up. Joining the club in 2009 are the following players:

Anthony Magnacca: attacking midfielder, who comes to the 'Bergers from North Coburg. Most likely to be used as an attacking option, likes to get forward & a proven goal-scoring option

Bob Petta: from Sydney FC, Petta is a highly-credentialled left-sided midfield player who gives the squad more versatility.

Osagie Ederaro: from Wollongong Wolves, this exciting 22-year-old striker has represented Nigeria at youth level. The club is hoping for many goals in the 2009 season from Ederaro, as a partner to Tsiorlas up front.

Rudi Saglam: signed from the VIS, this 17-year-old is a creative midfielder who may well be an impact player.

Leigh Minopoulos: from Diamond Valley, Leigh is a 19-year-old striker hoping to break into the senior squad.

Sebastian Mattei: signed from the AIS, Sebastian will be the back-up goalkeeper to Peter Gavalas.

The only significant departures from 2008 are Josip Kovic, who has transferred to Whittlesea & Saso Aleksovski, who despite re-signing with the club, awaits his final visa approval before returning to Australia. Sadly for the club and Robert Liparoti, the veteran defender continues to be sidelined with a chronic knee complaint & is still unable to resume playing. He will, however, still play a major role in the squad development during the 2009 season, and his input will be invaluable to the team.

The club goes into the 2009 confident that it has a squad capable of making the top six and challenging strongly for the VPL title. With its defence ably led by stalwart Daniel Jones, along with solid contributors James Stefanou, Peter Roberts, Jim Drossos, and with the return of Nevan Antic, backed up by youngsters such as Emir Ameti, 'keeper Peter Gavalas can feel sure of the support in front of him. With midfield dynamo Graham Hockless as playmaker, the irrepressible Tony Ouliaris in support with the likes of veteran Eric Vassilliadis, Marinos Gasparis, new recruits Anthony Magnacca & Bob Petta on board, there is no shortage of midfield power & penetration in the Heidelberg ranks. They will look to provide plenty of service to their strikers in the form of Mark Tsiorlas, Denis Alilovic & exciting prospect Osagie Ederando. Heidelberg takes on arch-rival South Melbourne in the final of the 2009 Hellenic Cup at John Cain Reserve, Northcote on Saturday 21st February as it finalises preparations for the 2009 season,

The club gratefully acknowledges the valued contributions of its major corporate sponsors, Copacabana International & Industrial Systems Institute, as well as all its other corporate partners for the 2009 season.

FAST FACTS

Formed 1958

Ground Address
Olympic Park (Village)
Heidelberg West
Mel: 19 D11

VPL Championships
4 (2001, 1990, 1988, 1975)

President Nick Katsakis
Coach George Katsakis
Captain Tony Ouliaris

Finished last season 4th

Top Scorer in 08
Graham Hockless 9 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes
Graham Hockless 32 votes
(Gold Medal winner)

Squad 2009
GOALKEEPERS
Peter Gavalas, Sebastian Mattei
Chris Lano

DEFENDERS
Emir Ameti, Jim Drossos,
Daniel Jones, Robert Liparoti,
Neven Antic, Peter Roberts
James Stefanou, Les Doumbalis
Nick Katsakis, Justin Coughlan
Anthony Iosifidis, Theo Papadimitriou
Justin Traitsis

MIDFIELD
Tony Ouliaris (C)
Eric Vassiliadis
Graham Hockless
Marinos Gasparis
Rudi Saglam
Anthony Magnacca
Ray Markley
Seb Henry
Adrian Piso
Michael Varkopoulos
Brenno De Almeida

FORWARDS
Mark Tsiorlas, Denis Alilovic,
Osagie Ederaro, Anthony Caratozzolo
Zlat Murathodznic, Andrew Taylor

The Berger Boys with Graham Hockless after winning the Gold Medal last season. After trials with Perth Glory during the off season the humble midfielder looks set to once again pull the strings from the middle of the park this season.

By John Fotinos

Photos by Daniel Flis

RICHMOND EAGLES

EAGLES READY TO SWOOP!

Chatz Prepares His Nest

2009 sees Richmond enter it's second season under coach Michael Chatzitrifonos. Last year he guided the side to a first ever taste of Finals football, with the club finishing a best-ever 5th placing in the Victorian Premier League.

From last year's side the major loss comes in the departure of Pablo Cardozo to Green Gully. Signed from Oakleigh Cannons, the former Socceroo and NSL Top Goalscorer found the net 20 times in the regular season, finishing the league's leading scorer and winning the Bill Fleming Medal. With Jesse Krncevic also returning to Germany, the Eagles will be forced to field an entirely new strikeforce this campaign.

At the other end of the field, goalkeeper Stewart Webster and defenders Noel Bahnsen and Shane Rexhepi have left to join newly-promoted Dandenong Thunder. Second choice keeper Daniel Neesham has joined Port Melbourne Sharks to gain regular first team football, with Jimmy Latinopoulos moving on to Bentleigh Greens. Midfielder Zoran Cvetkovski has retired, ending a career highlighted by Championship wins at Altona Magic in the mid-1990's.

Goalkeeper Peter Zois returns to Richmond where he played under Frank McGrellis when the club finished 3rd in Division One during the 1996 season. Since then he has spent a decade in Holland with NAC Breda and Willem II, returning to Australia last year and playing for Altona Magic and Frankston Pines. His first spell at Richmond occurred whilst he was at the Victorian Instutute of Sport, and his new understudy, Rani Dowisha, joins the club just having completed the programme there.

Erhan Karahan also joins the club after a spell overseas. A year at Sivasspor in Turkey followed stints in the VPL with Preston Lions and Heidelberg United. He will be expected to fill the void at left back which was only covered in a makeshift manner following the mid-season departure of Aaran Lines to the U.S.A. in the middle of the season last year. Former Melbourne Knights captain Tom Milardovic also joins the club after a season marred by injury as the Knights fell at the last hurdle in chasing the championship.

At right back Richmond have recruited Danny Black from Frankston Pines. The midfield has been bolstered with the signings from Western Suburbs of 2007 VPL Gold Medallist Terry Antoniadis and another player with vast professional experience in Europe, Lorenz Kindtner. Joern Heineke, a veteran of the German Regionalliga and Oberliga, also joins the squad.

2006 VPL Under 21 Player of the Year Daniel Visevic returns to the club after spells at Melbourne Knights was followed by a year in Croatia with Dinamo Zagreb and Lokomotiv Zagreb. He has scored 11 goals in 31 games with the club previously. He is joined by Nick Robinson from FC United of Manchester from the Northern Premier League Premier Division in England

The bulk of the midfield which took the Eagles to the Elimination Finals in 2008 remains intact. George Goutzioulis, Dimitri Tsiaras, Michael Catalano and Richie Cardozo all return for a second season at Kevin Bartlett Reserve. Youngster Nick Kalambokis is seven games short of making his 50th senior appearance for the club. Former Under 21 team captain Andrew Viola made the step up to first team football in 2008 and the young defender will be looking to make his first starting appearance in 2009.

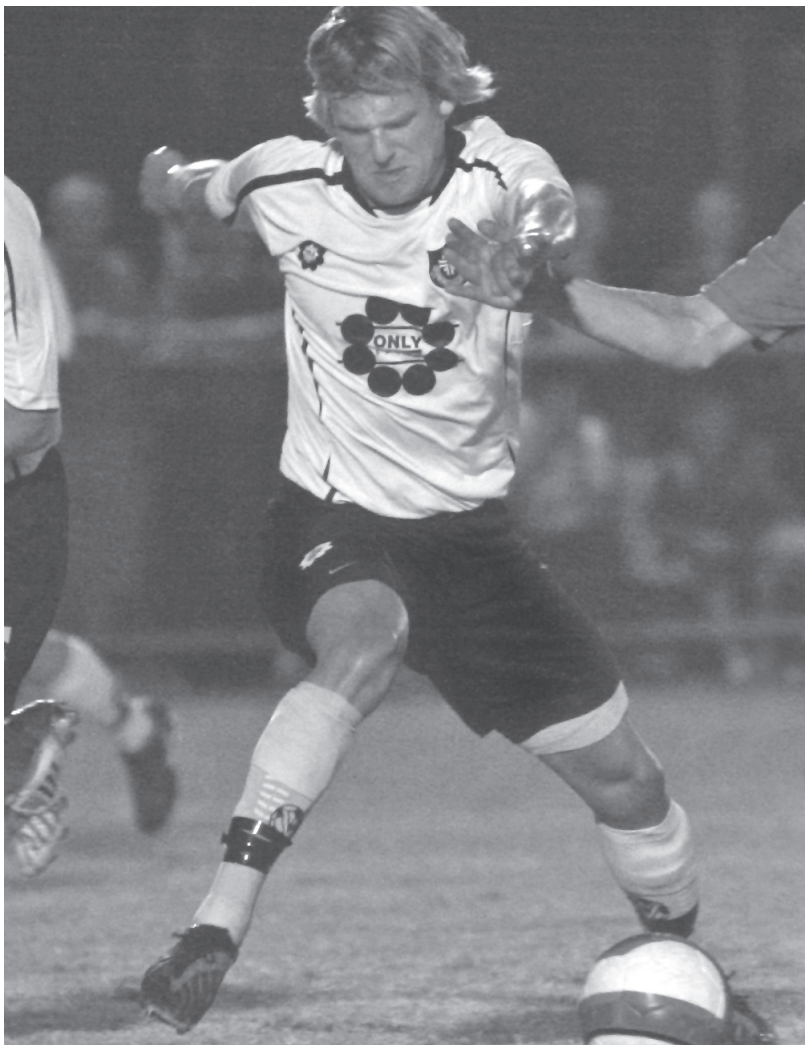
Club captain Stuart McCluskey has made 54 appearances since joining from Dundee in the middle of the 2006 season. He will be keen to tighten his defence which conceded considerably more goals than most of the title contenders last season, albeit in a team which scored more times than any other over the course of the season.

Brilliant right back Semir Sivic continues a long recovery from a devastating leg break against Heidelberg United in late July. It is unlikely he will figure in the first part of the season, and the return of a player who's form had him close to being picked up by A-League clubs will be eagerly awaited.

From the Under 21's side which finished runner's-up in the 2008 title race, Nemanja Govedarica, Tom Uskok, Mate Eterovic and Jad Hamzi could come into senior calculations.

The key issue for Richmond's hopes in 2009 will be filling the goals void left by the loss of Pablo Cardozo. Midfielders Richie Cardozo (10), Catalano (8) and Goutzioulis (5) all got amongst the goals last season and will need to do so again if Richmond are once again to play finals football. Visevic will be looking to establish a partnership with Nick Robinson similar to the one he shared with James Robinson in 2006. That season Robinson scored 13 goals in 19 games to propel him into the A-League with Melbourne Victory and later Perth Glory. Feeding off the target man, the young Visevic notched 10 goals in his first season of senior football.

The squad is arguably stronger than last season, but pre-season form has been rather indifferent. With two fewer teams in 2009 comes one less Finals place, but should the new team "click" September action may once again be achievable.



Boys are Back in Town I : Semir Sivic will make a long awaited return to action after recovering from a broken leg.

Boys are Back In Town II: Daniel Visevic makes a return to the VPL after enjoying a stint at Dinamo Zagreb in Croatia.

FAST FACTS

Formed 1953

Ground Address
Kevin Bartlett Reserve, F.R. Smith Drive, Richmond
Mel: 45 12

VPL Championships
None

President Helmut Kalitzki
Coach Mike Chatzitrifonas
Captain Stuart McCluskey

Finished last season 5th

Top Scorer in 08
Pablo Cardozo 21 goals (Golden Boot)

Most Gold Medal Votes
Jesse Krncevic 15 votes (13th)

Top Six Series

Squad 2009
Goalkeepers
Peter Zois (Frankston Pines)
Rani Dowisha (VIS)

Defenders
Stuart McCluskey
Tom Milardovic (Melbourne Knights)
Andrew Viola
Erhan Karahan (Sivasspor)
Danny Black (Frankston Pines)
Nemanja Govedarica
Semir Sivic

Midfielders
Dimitri Tsiaras
Richie Cardozo
George Goutzioulis
Terry Antoniadis (Western Suburbs)
Lorenz Kindtner (Western Suburbs)
Michael Catalano
Tom Uskok
Mate Eterovic

Strikers
Nick Robinson (FC United)
Nick Kalambokis
Daniel Visevic (Dinamo Zagreb)

By Mark Boric

Photos by John Punshon

PRESTON LIONS

LIONS KEEN FOR JUBILEE ROAR

Trajcevski Replaces "Jonesy"

As one of Victoria's proudest football clubs, Preston Lions have commenced their 50th anniversary celebrations with a summer of upheaval, losing favourite son and senior coach John Markovski barely a month before season kick-off.

Markovski's sudden departure from the Lions' den has coincided with the disintegration of the playing roster, with some eight first-team players departing Connor Reserve during the off-season.

Despite the movement, the Preston faithful will be buoyed by the appointment of Zoran Trajcevski, who ironically replaced John Markovski as head coach at the club upon the conclusion of the 2003 season. Trajcevski took the Lions to fourth spot the following year, only to lose to arch rivals Altona Magic in the Elimination Final. Trajcevski will bring a renewed confidence to his second coaching stint at the club, no doubt aiming to replicate the success he has had in the first division, where he was instrumental in the promotion of Springvale White Eagles (2006) and Dandenong Thunder (2008) to the Premier League.

The key departures resulting from the summer player exodus read like a VPL all-star team since the turn of the century. Lou Acevski, Les Anastasiou, Johnny Sapazovski, Nick Schwal and Tony Sterjovski, take with them over 1,200 games of top flight experience, not to mention the core leadership group of the 2008 playing roster.

The club has turned to its youth ranks and the state leagues in an attempt to tackle the formidable task of rebuilding the squad, with Damir Salcin and Ivan Filipovic transferring to the club from St Albans, Stuart Wilson arriving from the Victorian Institute of Sport and Mario Ladnjak securing a promotion to the senior squad after impressing for the Under 21s last season.

However, the key signing for the Lions is perhaps the return of Serkan Oksuz, who gained a transfer from relegated Western Suburbs. As a promising eighteen-year-old in 2005, Oksuz was the talk of the competition, scoring 8 goals in 23 starts for the Lions, and snared the award for the Victorian Under 21 Player of the Year. His career has somewhat stalled since that stellar season, but a mid-season move to Western Suburbs witnessed signs of improvement during the previous campaign, and having returned to the club where he achieved so much personal success, there is an air of expectation that the 23-year-old can reclaim that form once again.

Serkan Oksuz makes a return to Connor Reserve in Preston colours again

Lions captain Michael Bosevski

The only player with over 100 games of VPL experience to his name, it is no surprise to see Michael Bosevski handed the captain's armband for the club's anniversary year. His experience will prove vital as Preston attempts to rebuild its leadership group, and he will rely heavily on support from evergreen striker Blaze Georgioski (vice captain), and a new brigade of experienced youngsters in the form of Igor Arsovski, Robert Dolevski, Igor Kolevski and Michael Miskas (deputy vice captain). All were key members of a significantly more experienced squad in 2008, and will be expected to take the next step if Preston have any hope of mounting a serious finals challenge.

With so much change at the club in recent weeks, supporters will do well to have patience with a unit that has experimented heavily over a disjointed pre-season. Expectations will no doubt be high in such an important year, but there is a strong likelihood that the team may not hit its straps until the second half of the campaign. Early signs in January indicated a club in turmoil, however the swift appointment of Zoran Trajcevski as head coach has allowed some time for foundations to be laid, and should he gain the confidence of the dressing room, there is enough talent at his disposal to ensure that 2009 will be remembered for more than just a celebration of the club's rich heritage.

By Tony Persoglia

Photos by Nome Risteski

FAST FACTS

Formed 1959

Ground Address
BT Connor Reserve
Broadhurst Avenue Reservoir
Mel:18-B2

VPL Championships
4 (2007, 2002, 1994, 1980)

President Cvetan Veljanovski
Coach Zoran Trajcevski
Captain Michael Bosevski

Finished last season 6th

Top Scorer in 08
John Sapazovski 10 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes
Tony Sterjovski 30 votes (4th)

Squad 2009
Michael Bosevski (C)
Chris Toleski
Michael Miskas
Zeljko Popovic
Blaze Georgioski
Igor Arsovski
Igor Kolevski
Aleksandar Stojanovski (GK)
Bale Micovski
Robert Najdovski
Goce Gruevski (GK)
Robert Dolevski
Damir Salcin (GK) (from St Albans Saints)
Ivan Filipovic (from St Albans Saints)
Serkan Oksuz (from Western Suburbs)
Marko Lazarevic (from Radnicki NIS, Serbia)
Stuart Wilson (from V.I.S)
Mario Ladnjak (from Preston Lions FC Under 21's)

OUTS
Lupce Acevski (Hume City FC)
Victor Pititto (FC Clifton Hill - pending)
Les Anastasiou (Fawkner Blues - pending)
Nicholas Schwal (Sunshine Georgies - pending)
Stephen Masalkovski (Fawkner Blues - pending)
Tony Sterjovski (Hume City FC)
John Sapazovski (Sunshine Georgies - pending)

OAKLEIGH CANNONS

CANNONS PREPARE TO FIRE

Johnny A Takes Aim From Jack's Place

The Oakleigh Cannons begin their quest for Victorian Premier League glory in season 2009, aiming to go at least one better than last season where the club narrowly missed out in taking part in the finals series.

This setback could well and truly be a motivating factor for the Cannons who have strengthened their ranks with the acquisition of new coaching staff and a playing roster ready to fire. It looks to be a mouth watering match in the opening fixture of the VPL this Friday night, against fierce rivals Heidelberg United.

Taking the reins this year, following the departure of now appointed Dandenong Thunder coach Stuart Munro, is ex-South Melbourne championship winning coach John Anastasiadis. Subsequent to Munro leaving the club he served so well in his time at Jack Edwards Reserve, new recruit Anastasiadis will work in combination with the also newly appointed assistant coach Bill Theodoropoulos, to add to the experience and direction of achieving potential success this year.

The Cannons commence their season with an advantageous triple home fixture in what looks to be a potential platform to kick starting their season on winning ways. The cauldron of Jack Edwards Reserve has proven to be such an asset for the club in the past few years. They will be hoping this continues to be their stomping ground in season 2009 in order to gain maximum momentum, by putting visiting teams very much on the back foot.

Leading the side once again will be long serving captain Felix Rosman, whose experience at this level will only pay dividends in igniting the potential of the rest of the playing group. Not to mention the likes of the Drakos brothers, goal keeper Adrian Cagalj, playmaker Bill Damianos and the speedy Juan Nilo along with his new strike partner Ricky Diaco, fulfilling similar roles. Ricky Diaco rejoins his ex-coach John Anastasiadis from South Melbourne, striving to regain some of his greatest form following a lay off with injury. He will be hoping to bang home many goals for the Cannons this year. He seems to be a fantastic replacement for Oakleigh's former goal poacher Frank Lagana who netted an impressive 10 goals for the Cannons in season 2008. In defense the combination of ex-Melbourne Knights utility man and now attack minded full back Ivan Franjic looks to be a certain hit, along with the signing of Dario Matkovic, whose pre-season performances have shown a fantastic level of consistency, which will be instrumental for the club. The Cannons attainment of defensive and midfield utility Bonel Obradovic, from the AIS, could also give Anastasiadis the flexibility of changing his structure at any given time.

John Anastasiadis displays his new colours in his new surroundings

Into the midfield, it will be business as usual for Bill Damianos, Scott Webster and Ramsey Nasser who will surely provide great motors and creative play throughout the middle of the park. New faces surrounding them will include the recruits of Alex Rohas (Bentleigh Greens), Kris Kioussis (Bentleigh Greens), Mathew Wilkinson (interstate – Newcastle, NSW), Simon Mur (Frankston Pines) and Steven Hatzikostas from Melbourne Victory youth. The dazzling Trent Waterson will also once again be a real threat down the flanks for the Cannons with his ability to beat his immediate opponent, exposing holes in the opposition's defense.

Moving forward up the park as previously mentioned, Ricky Diaco will look to spearhead the Cannons attack. He will be accompanied by former Whittlesea target man Jerry Karpeh whose physique and aerial power will definitely provide opposition defenses with a tough task to keep him quiet.

Anastasiadis has also looked down south to acquire the services of Tasmanian Premier League championship player Bill Gasparinatos who was nothing but impressive in a friendly between the Cannons and South Hobart FC earlier this month. Juan Nilo will add some great depth to the Oakleigh Cannons frontline along with U20 Australian International Milos Lujic. Overall, to his credit Anastasiadis has managed to blend a combination of an admirable sequence of know-how with the upcoming rise of potential youth prodigies.

Most notably new recruit from Bentleigh Greens, 16 year old Kristopher Kioussis has proven to add some real excitement to the attacking ranks of the club throughout pre-season friendly games and Hellenic Cup fixtures. The Cannons have also gained the signatures of Melbourne Victory youth players Stephen Hatzikostas and Robert Wynne. Hatzikostas is renowned for his hard ball winning and classy distribution. Wynne, along with former South Melbourne player Srdjan Stefanovic, will both be looking as candidates to help sure things up in defense.

The Oakleigh Cannons certainly look a force that could very well go all the way, having put a grueling pre season under their belt and showing promising signs, despite a Hellenic Cup semi-final loss to South Melbourne. In what was an epic encounter, the Cannons displayed a tremendous amount of character to come from two goals down and force the game into added time, despite South Melbourne striker Vaughn Coveny putting the game beyond doubt, with just minutes remaining. This determination to fight back is definitely recognition of the side showing great signs of unity and will to succeed within the playing group.

As noted the Cannon's lineup is one of strength and must be considered as a real chance to achieve a minimum of participation in this year's finals series. The talent, the experience, and the belief could prove instrumental in what looks to be an exciting season for the playing group and coaching staff of the Oakleigh Cannons Football Club.

Club President Stan Papayianerris and GM Aki Ionnas

FAST FACTS

Formed 1972

Ground Address
Jack Edwards Reserve
Edward Street, Oakleigh
Mel: 69 H9

VPL Championships
None

President Stan Papayianneris
General Manager Aki Ionnas
Support Staff Eric Martin
Physio Josh Taylor
Club Doctor Dr. Nick Stragalinos
Team Manager George Babatsias

Coach John Anastasiadis
Assistant senior coach
Bill Theodoropoulos
Captain Felix Rosman

Finished last season 7th

Top Scorer in 08
Frank Lagana 10 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes
Trent Waterson 16 votes (10th)

Squad 2009
GOALKEEPERS
Adrian Cagalj, Scott Agustin,
Dean Anastasiadis

DEFENDERS
Felix Rosman, Stelios Drakos,
Ari Drakos, Ivan Franjic,
Robert Wynne, Dario Matkovic,
Srdjan Stefanovic

MIDFIELDERS
Bill Damaianos, Alex Rojas,
Trent Waterson, Bonel Obradovic,
Kris Kioussis, Scott Webster, George
Lambadaridis, Mathew Wilkinson,
Ramsey Nasser, Stephen Hatzikostas,
Simon Mur

STRIKERS
Ricky Diaco, Jerry Karpeh
Juan Nilo, Milos Lujic,
Bill Gasparinatos

By George Lambadaridis
Photos by Peter Kakalias

SOUTH MELBOURNE

SOUTH SET TO CELEBRATE

50th Anniversary For Lakeside Club

After a turbulent 2008 season on the park, South Melbourne FC will be looking to celebrate its 50th year in a manner that is more synonymous with the most famous and successful football club in Australia, after missing the VPL finals in the last two seasons.

Leading the way for South will be experienced coach Michael Michalakopoulos, who was retained after taking over the club mid-way through 2008 following the resignation of John Anastasiadis. Michalakopoulos will lead a new-look football department, along with new football director Ang Dallas and assistant coach Phil Pelandrinos.

In goals, South has retained the former A-League goalkeeper Tommi Tomich for another season. Tomich is regarded as one of the best shot stoppers in the league and will provide South with an adequate replacement for the retired Dean Anastasiadis. Serving under Tommich will be youngsters Stefan Sardelic (retained from 2008) and Andrew Sfetkopoulos, who has joined from State League 2 club Altona East.

Sitting in front of the keepers will be a very well credentialed and experienced defensive unit that will be lead by 2009 captain Rama Tavsancioglu, who is just six games shy of reaching 100 senior games for South. 'Rama' will lead a defence that includes vice captain Steven O'Dor and the newly acquired Stiven Mrkela. 27 year old Mrkela joined from reigning VPL champions Altona Magic in the off-season and will bring a wealth of experience to the defence. A former Altona captain, Mrkela will add leadership and hardness to a previously brittle defence.

Throughout the middle of the park South will be once again looking at Futsalroo Fernando De Moraes to provide the spark. The midfielder is just 10 games away from joining an illustrious group that have represented the club in 100 matches or more, but more importantly, South fans will be hoping that he can re-produce the stunning form that he showed in the 2006 championship winning season. Joining Fernando will be former Fawkner player Joseph Youssef, who will be looking to cement a starting eleven birth with his tough tackles and pushing forward at every opportunity.

Up front South will go into the season with four very competent attacking players at VPL level. One of these will be former NSL and A-League player and South legend Vaughan Coveny. The man known as 'Horse' has arrived back at lakeside to provide the club with a leader both on and off the park, something that he has done proudly in his 276 games for the club to date. Three goals in 2009 will bring up a century of South Melbourne goals for the former Kiwi international, in a 12 season career with South that began in the 1995/96 NSL season.

Pairing up with the veteran will be either Gianni De Nittis, Nathan Caldwell or the speedy Goran Zoric, all who have been in blistering form throughout the pre-season and Hellenic Cup competition.

Though the final make-up of the starting eleven is not straight forward, what can be established is that the squad is a very deep and experienced group of players, all of whom have the hunger to try and avenge the disappointment of the last two seasons by playing a prominent role in 2009.

South's first game will be against newly promoted Dandenong Thunder on Sunday March 1st at Bob Jane Stadium. Kick-off is at 6pm.

FAST FACTS

Formed 1959
Bob Jane Stadium
25 Albert Road Drive
Albert Park
Victoria, 3206
Mel: 57 H4

VPL Championships
8 (2006, 1976, 1974, 1972. 1966, 1965, 1964, 1962)

President Leo Athanasakis
Coach Michael Michalakopoulos
Captain Ramazan Tavsancioglu

Finished last season 9th
Top Scorer in 08
Fernado De Moraes 9 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes
Rama Tavsancioglo 17 votes

Squad 2009
1.Tommi Tomich
2. Shane Nunes
3. Rhodri Payne
4. Steven O'Dor
5. Con Blatsis
6. Eddie Cetkin
7. Nic Curtis
8. Vaughn Coveny
9. Gianni De Nittis
10. Joseph Youseff
11. Yusef Yusef
12. Sam Torrens
13. Francesco Stella
14. Ramazan Tavsancioglu
15. Fernando De Moraes
17. Stiven Mrkela
18. Dejan Radojicic
19. Goran Zoric
20. Nathan Caldwell
21. Stefan Sardelic
23. Sebastian Petrovic
41. Andrew Sfetcopoulos

Coach Mike Michalakopoulos and captain Rama Tavsanciioglu get their hands on the first bit of silverware on offer for the year - The Hellenic Cup. Perhaps a sign of things to come in South's birthday year?

By George Kouroumalis
Photos by Peter Kakalias

HUME CITY FC

NEW HOME, NEW NAME, NEW DREAM

VPL Welcomes Its "Newest" Addition

Walking up Pascoe Vale Road toward Broadmeadows Shopping Centre, talking about Hume City FC, people tend to ask "what FC?" Formerly known as Coburg United FC, the club formed in 1979 has finally made the relocation to its long term home Broadmeadows Valley Park on the corner of Pascoe Vale Road and Barry Road.

The club which has been playing out of its territory for the last two seasons, is relieved to bring the club back to its supporter base.

Club Team Manager Hakan Dogan said "We were struggling to attract our supporters to attend Knights Stadium. We have now commenced works to ensure a football hub is created within our own back yard. It has been pretty hard work and intense negotiations have taken place, with so many stakeholders it took a while to finalise the deal, but we can now see the light at the end of the tunnel. The Hume City Council and Football Federation Victoria have been absolutely fantastic"

With the energy around the club at a all time high, the football department has been working tirelessly to ensure a competitive outfit represents the red and white. After an indifferent season in its inaugural year in the VPL, the club has parted ways with Anthony Magnacca, Sime Kovacevic, Peter Tichy, Thomas Kovar , Nick Lazerevski and Mustafa Mustafa who announced his retirement from the Victorian Premier League. In place the club has lured the services of a great mix of young and experienced talent.

Signing Louie Acevski and Tony Sterjovski (Preston Lions), Izzy Erdogan (Adelaide United), Zoran Petrevski (Melbourne Knights), Jonathon Minos (Oakliegh Cannons) as well as young talent Jason Davidson (Jeff United FC), Ramazan Savran (Izmirspor), Nick Harrhy (Sunshine George Cross) coach Goran Lozanovski said, 'we have tried to put together a team that can not only play football but a bunch of boys who have great character. I have worked with most of the boys previously and they are fantastic characters. With these experienced players and the young talent like Jason Davidson, Ramazan Savran, Caner Ucarli, Turhan Sumbul and Mehmet Karakilic who will be keeping the rest of the squad on their toes, we will aim to make the final 6 and then anything is possible. We have had a very solid pre-season, the boys can't wait for the season to begin."

Keen to make a name for itself in the VPL for a number of years to come, the club is excited at the fact that it has a whole municipality that it is representing. Club communications manager Ezel Hikmet expressed, "One of our major aims is to be the face of the City of Hume when it comes to Soccer/Football. There is a population of over 157,000 people that live here, when they think of Victorian Premier League, we want them to think of Hume City FC. We want the excitement of the crowds which watch the Melbourne Victory to filter through to the VPL and grassroots, we can really start something exceptional. We have a high profiled coach and a talented list, it is now up to the football enthusiasts to follow suit."

Hume City FC will kick off its 2009 VPL season campaign against reigning champions Altona Magic FC at home on the 1st of March 2009.

FAST FACTS

Formed 1979

Ground Address
Corner of Barry Road and Pacoe Vale Road, Broadmedows
Mel: 6 G3

VPL Championships None

President Steve Kaya
Coach Goran Lozanovski
Captain Serdar Pir

Finished last season 10th

Top Scorer in 08

Most Gold Medal Votes

Top Six Series

Squad 2009
Lou Acevski (from Preston Lions)
Adam Hrehoresin
Ahmet Gurpinar
Serdar Pir
Tansel Baser
Isyan Erdogan (from Adelaide Utd)
Jason Davidson (from Jeff Utd, Japan)
Tony Sterjovski (from Preston Lions)
Johnathan Munoz (from Oakleigh)
Ross Thompson
Brendan Beni
Caner Ucarli
Ramazan Savran (from Izmirspor, Turkey)
Alfonso Apazo (from Thunder)
Andy Vlahos

Zoran Petrevski (from Melb Knights)
Memet Karakilic

Turhan Sumbul
Dragi Nastevski
Nick Harrhy (from Sunshine Georgeis)

Tansel Baser will no doubt be a tower of strength for newly named Hume City this year, as the ambitious club looks set for a serious tilt at the VPL title.

By John Attard

Photos by John Punshon

WHITTLESEA ZEBRAS

ZEBRAS TO BUCK RECENT TRENDS

High Hopes Held to Rise from The Ashes

With the smoke from the Kinglake bushfires drifting over Epping Stadium, the Whittlesea Zebras have been training hard ahead of the 2009 Victorian Premier League season.

"You can see the smoke billowing from just over the hill when we're training at Epping and we've been affected by smoke haze, but I would say from a preparation point of view it hasn't affected us, apart from the obvious emotional affect," Zebras coach Ivan Jolic said.

He said the bushfires have touched the community, as it has the nation, but no players were directly affected and the team has been training hard to rectify the 11th place finish in 2008.

"Last year was very disappointing and I took it pretty harsh with the boys. We turned over ten players this year as a result of it. We won't accept mediocrity and we believe we have bolstered our squad to hopefully eliminate that happening again."

Jolic has only one goal at this stage of the season.

"There is no point starting the season unless you want to be a part of the finals. It's a funny league in that with the depth that we have hopefully it will all go well for the year."

The coach says there are several key players returning to the club and some young players coming up through the club's ranks.

Star playmaker Josip Kozic is returning along with Tex Apostalikis and Marco Santilli, all three being former Zebra players.

'Kozic brings a fair bit of experience, a winning culture, competitiveness and a quality that I thought we lacked last year which is on-field leadership.

"He has lost somewhere between 13 and 15kgs during the pre-season. Whittlesea suits Tex and his character perfectly but he's not a young kid anymore so there will be pressure on him."

The first challenge will be against 2008 finalist Richmond, away from home, before facing last season's minor premiers Green Gully at Harvest Home Rd.

"You never want to play the two best teams in the league. Based on their squads, they will be in the top two or three teams by the end of the campaign. In saying that, if I have a preference I would prefer to play them in the first two weeks than half way during the year. Ultimately these two games will give us a very good understanding as to where we are as a playing group."

Jolic is confident that captain Ross Antoniadis will be a key figure this year.

"Ross is the backbone of our team, on the field and off the field. His performances pre season has probably been in the top three of our team. I'd like to think he will make a big impact on the actual league, not just our team."

Antoniadis says he expects the team will improve this year.

"We're shrinking the squad and we are heading into the season with confidence this year.

"[Josip] Kozic, Tex [Apostalakis] and Marco [Santili] have had plenty of years of experience and they are proven performers. They have played well for the club in the past and we don't see any reason why they can't do that again."

But while it's the senior players that will hopefully guide the Zebras to the championship, the team will need some young players to step up.

Jolic is keen to praise the workrate of the Zebras' juniors.

"Julian Cassano, who is 16 years old, was a top performer during the pre-season and hopefully he, and some other young players like Nick Sarbin and Simon Symeoy, will stand up this year."

With an impressive mix of youth and experience and under the guidance of the determined Jolic, one can expect the Zebras to be in the mix come finals time.

Whittlesea Zebras FC Jumper sponsors President Chris Dzanovski with Metalform Group Managing Director Peter Balassone

Holiday snaps of the Zebras at-their training camp in Anglesea earlier this year. Above is the Predator FC intra team.

The Kamikaze FC team hard at it in preparation for the new sason

By Addy Wetzler

Photos by Frank Carbone

FAST FACTS

Formed 2006

Ground Address
Epping Stadium
Epping Mel:182 B4

VPL Championships
2 (1997, 2004)

President Chris Dzanovski
Coach Ivan Jolic
Captain Ross Antoniadis

Finished last season 13th

Top Scorer in 08
Jerry Karpeh 9 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes
Ross Antoniadis 26 votes (6th)

Squad 2009
1 Kenny Gerochristodoulou
Goalkeeper
2 Mark Pistininzi
3 John Angelovski
4 Ross Antoniadis (C)
5 Stefan Piorkowski
6 Sime Kovacevic
7 Marko Kuna
8 Edemar Garcia
9 Tex Apostalikas
10 Josip Kozic
11 Marco Santilli
12 Mark Vazocchi
13 Brandon Vassallo
14 Andrea Lombardo
15 Ryan O'Hare
16 Steve Martin
17 Nick Sarbin
18 Simon Symeoy
19 Julian Cassano
20 Robert Simeoni (GK)
21 Haydan D'Agostino
22 Greg Lombardo

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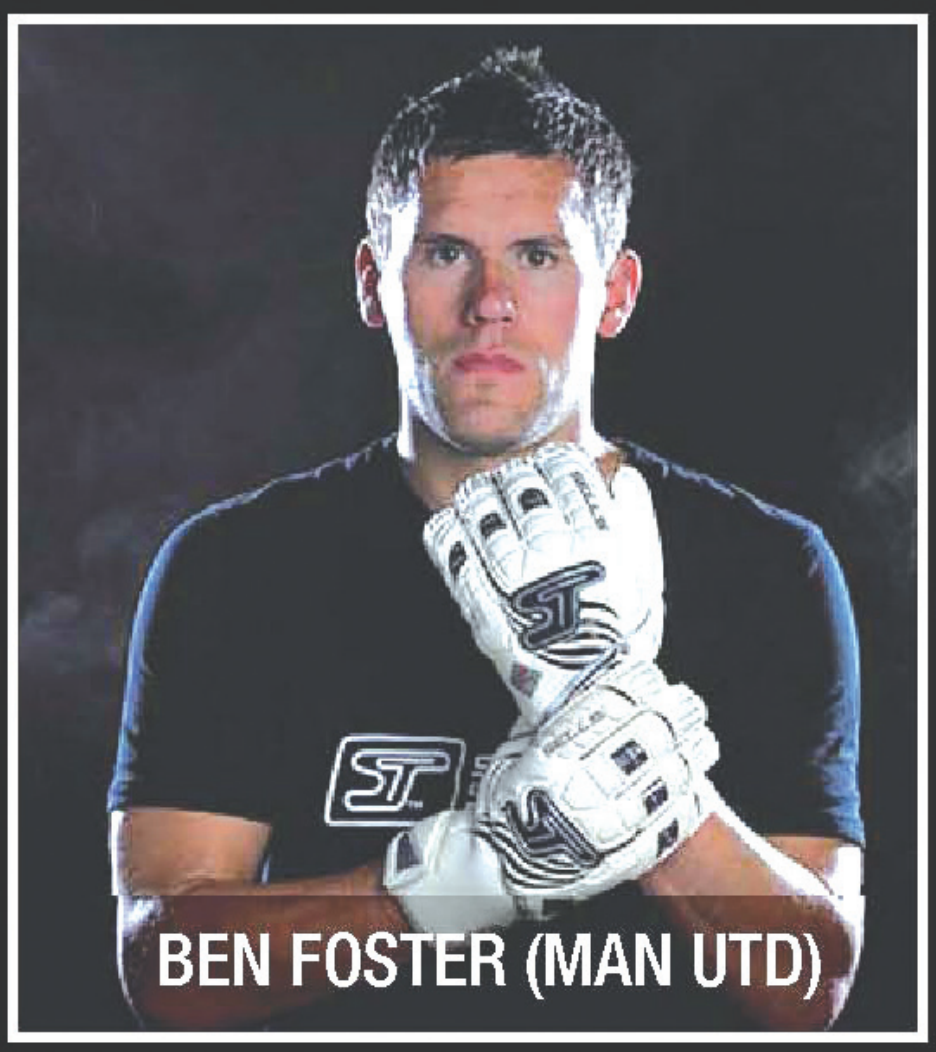

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IN ALL GOOD FOOTBALL STORES NOW

VICTORIAN PREMIER LEAGUE FIXTURE LIST 2009

Round 1
Fri 27 Feb 8:30PM Richmond v Whittlesea Zebras Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Fri 27 Feb 8:30PM Oakleigh Cannons v Heidelberg Utd Jack Edwards Reserve
Sat 1 Mar 4:00PM Hume City v Altona Magic To Be Confirmed
Sat 1 Mar 5:00PM Preston Lions v Melbourne Knights BT Connor Reserve
Sat 1 Mar 5:00PM Green Gully Cavaliers v Sunshine Georgies Green Gully Reserve
Sat 1 Mar 6:00PM South Melbourne v Dandenong Thunder Bob Jane Stadium

Round 2
Fri 6 Mar 8:30PM Oakleigh Cannons v Dandenong Thunder Jack Edwards Reserve
Sat 7 Mar 7:30PM Altona Magic v Preston Lions Paisley Park Soccer Complex
Sun 8 Mar 5:00PM Sunshine Georgies v Hume City To Be Confirmed
Sun 8 Mar 5:00PM Melbourne Knights v Richmond Knights Stadium
Sun 8 Mar 6:00PM South Melbourne v Heidelberg Utd Bob Jane Stadium
Mon 9 Mar 8:30PM Whittlesea Zebras v Green Gully Cavaliers Epping Soccer Stadium

Round 3
Fri 13 Mar 8:30PM Oakleigh Cannons v Melbourne Knights Jack Edwards Reserve
Sat 14 Mar 5:00PM Green Gully Cavaliers v Dandenong Thunder Green Gully Res
Sat 14 Mar 7:30PM Altona Magic v Richmond Paisley Park Soccer Complex
Sun 15 Mar 4:00PM Hume City v Whittlesea Zebras To Be Confirmed
Sun 15 Mar 5:00PM Preston Lions v South Melbourne BT Connor Reserve
Mon 16 Mar 8:30PM Heidelberg Utd v Sunshine Georgies Olympic Park (Village)

Round 4
Fri 20 Mar 8:30PM Richmond v Sunshine Georgies Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Sat 21 Mar 4:00PM Hume City v Heidelberg Utd To Be Confirmed
Sat 21 Mar 6:00PM Dandenong Thunder v Altona Magic George Andrews Reserve
Sun 22 Mar 5:00PM Preston Lions v Green Gully Cavaliers BT Connor Reserve
Sun 22 Mar 6:00PM South Melbourne v Melbourne Knights Bob Jane Stadium
Mon 23 Mar 8:30PM Whittlesea Zebras v Oakleigh Cannons Epping Soccer Stadium

Round 5
Fri 27 Mar 8:30PM Richmond v Preston Lions Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Fri 27 Mar 8:30PM Oakleigh Cannons v Sunshine Georgies Jack Edwards Reserve
Sat 28 Mar 5:00PM Green Gully Cavaliers v Melbourne Knights Green Gully Reserve
Sat 28 Mar 6:00PM Dandenong Thunder v Hume City George Andrews Reserve
Sun 30 Mar 8:30PM Whittlesea Zebras v South Melbourne Epping Soccer Stadium
Sun 30 Mar 8:30PM Heidelberg Utd v Altona Magic Olympic Park (Village)

Round 6
Sat 4 Apr 7:30PM Altona Magic v Green Gully Cavaliers Paisley Park Soccer Complex
Sun 5 Apr 3:00PM Sunshine Georgies v Dandenong Thunder To Be Confirmed
Sun 5 Apr 3:00PM Melbourne Knights v Hume City Knights Stadium
Sun 5 Apr 3:00PM Oakleigh Cannons v Preston Lions Jack Edwards Reserve
Sun 5 Apr 4:00PM South Melbourne v Richmond Bob Jane Stadium
Mon 6 Apr 8:30PM Whittlesea Zebras v Heidelberg Utd Epping Soccer Stadium

Round 7
Mon 13 Apr 7:00PM Oakleigh Cannons v Richmond Jack Edwards Reserve
Sat 18 Apr 4:00PM Green Gully Cavaliers v South Melbourne Green Gully Reserve
Sun 19 Apr 3:00PM Hume City v Preston Lions To Be Confirmed
Sun 19 Apr 3:00PM Sunshine Georgies v Altona Magic To Be Confirmed
Sun 19 Apr 6:00PM Dandenong Thunder v Whittlesea Zebras George Andrews Res
Mon 20 Apr 8:30PM Heidelberg Utd v Melbourne Knights Olympic Park (Village)

Round 8
Fri 24 Apr 8:30PM Richmond v Dandenong Thunder Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Sat 25 Apr 3:00PM Hume City v South Melbourne To Be Confirmed
Sat 25 Apr 4:00PM Green Gully Cavaliers v Heidelberg Utd Green Gully Reserve
Sat 25 Apr 7:30PM Altona Magic v Oakleigh Cannons Paisley Park Soccer Complex
Sun 26 Apr 3:00PM Melbourne Knights v Whittlesea Zebras Knights Stadium
Sun 26 Apr 3:00PM Preston Lions v Sunshine Georgies BT Connor Reserve

Round 9
Sat 2 May 6:00PM Dandenong Thunder v Preston Lions George Andrews Reserve
Sun 3 May 3:00PM Hume City v Green Gully Cavaliers To Be Confirmed
Sun 3 May 3:00PM Sunshine Georgies v Melbourne Knights To Be Confirmed
Sun 3 May 3:00PM Whittlesea Zebras v Altona Magic Epping Soccer Stadium
Sun 3 May 4:00PM South Melbourne v Oakleigh Cannons Bob Jane Stadium
Mon 4 May 8:30PM Heidelberg Utd v Richmond Olympic Park (Village)

Round 10
Fri 8 May 8:30PM Richmond v Hume City Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Sat 9 May 4:00PM Green Gully Cavaliers v Oakleigh Cannons Green Gully Reserve
Sun 10 May 3:00PM Sunshine Georgies v Whittlesea Zebras To Be Confirmed
Sun 10 May 3:00PM Melbourne Knights v Dandenong Thunder Knights Stadium
Sun 10 May 3:00PM Preston Lions v Heidelberg Utd BT Connor Reserve
Sun 10 May 4:00PM South Melbourne v Altona Magic Bob Jane Stadium

Round 11
Fri 15 May 8:30PM Richmond v Green Gully Cavaliers Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Sat 16 May 6:00PM Dandenong Thunder v Heidelberg Utd George Andrews Reserve
Sat 16 May 7:30PM Altona Magic v Melbourne Knights Paisley Park Soccer Complex
Sun 17 May 3:00PM Hume City v Oakleigh Cannons To Be Confirmed
Sun 17 May 3:00PM Sunshine Georgies v South Melbourne To Be Confirmed
Sun 17 May 3:00PM Whittlesea Zebras v Preston Lions Epping Soccer Stadium

Round 12
Sat 23 May 7:30PM Altona Magic v Hume City Paisley Park Soccer Complex
Sun 24 May 3:00PM Sunshine Georgies v Green Gully Cavaliers To Be Confirmed
Sun 24 May 3:00PM Melbourne Knights v Preston Lions Knights Stadium
Sun 24 May 3:00PM Whittlesea Zebras v Richmond Epping Soccer Stadium
Sun 24 May 4:00PM Dandenong Thunder v South Melbourne George Andrews Res
Mon 25 May 8:30PM Heidelberg Utd v Oakleigh Cannons Olympic Park (Village)

Round 13
Fri 29 May 8:30PM Richmond v Melbourne Knights Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Sat 30 May 4:00PM Green Gully Cavaliers v Whittlesea Zebras Green Gully Reserve
Sat 30 May 6:00PM Dandenong Thunder v Oakleigh Cannons George Andrews Re
Sun 31 May 3:00PM Hume City v Sunshine Georgies To Be Confirmed
Sun 31 May 3:00PM Preston Lions v Altona Magic BT Connor Reserve
Mon 1 Jun 8:30PM Heidelberg Utd v South Melbourne Olympic Park (Village)

Round 14
Fri 12 Jun 8:30PM Richmond v Altona Magic Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Sat 13 Jun 6:00PM Dandenong Thunder v Green Gully Cavs George Andrews Res
Sun 14 Jun 3:00PM South Melbourne v Preston Lions Bob Jane Stadium
Sun 14 Jun 3:00PM Melbourne Knights v Oakleigh Cannons Knights Stadium
Sun 14 Jun 3:00PM Whittlesea Zebras v Hume City Epping Soccer Stadium
Sun 14 Jun 3:00PM Sunshine Georgies v Heidelberg Utd To Be Confirmed

Round 15
Fri 19 Jun 8:30PM Oakleigh Cannons v Whittlesea Zebras Jack Edwards Reserve
Sat 20 Jun 4:00PM Green Gully Cavaliers v Preston Lions Green Gully Reserve
Sat 20 Jun 7:30PM Altona Magic v Dandenong Thunder Paisley Park Soccer Complex
Sun 21 Jun 3:00PM Sunshine Georgies v Richmond To Be Confirmed
Sun 21 Jun 4:00PM Melbourne Knights v South Melbourne Knights Stadium
Mon 22 Jun 8:30PM Heidelberg Utd v Hume City Olympic Park (Village)

Round 16
Sat 27 Jun 7:30PM Altona Magic v Heidelberg Utd Paisley Park Soccer Complex
Sun 28 Jun 3:00PM Preston Lions v Richmond BT Connor Reserve
Sun 28 Jun 3:00PM Melbourne Knights v Green Gully Cavaliers Knights Stadium
Sun 28 Jun 3:00PM South Melbourne v Whittlesea Zebras Bob Jane Stadium
Sun 28 Jun 3:00PM Sunshine Georgies v Oakleigh Cannons To Be Confirmed
Sun 28 Jun 3:00PM Hume City v Dandenong Thunder To Be Confirmed

Round 17
Fri 10 Jul 8:30PM Richmond v South Melbourne Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Sat 11 Jul 4:00PM Green Gully Cavaliers v Altona Magic Green Gully Reserve
Sat 11 Jul 6:00PM Dandenong Thunder v Sunshine Georgies George Andrews Res
Sun 12 Jul 3:00PM Hume City v Melbourne Knights To Be Confirmed
Sun 12 Jul 3:00PM Preston Lions v Oakleigh Cannons BT Connor Reserve
Mon 13 Jul 8:30PM Heidelberg Utd v Whittlesea Zebras Olympic Park (Village)

Round 18
Fri 17 Jul 8:30PM Richmond v Oakleigh Cannons Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Sat 18 Jul 7:30PM Altona Magic v Sunshine Georgies Paisley Park Soccer Complex
Sun 19 Jul 3:00PM Preston Lions v Hume City BT Connor Reserve
Sun 19 Jul 3:00PM Melbourne Knights v Heidelberg Utd Knights Stadium
Sun 19 Jul 3:00PM Whittlesea Zebras v Dandenong Thunder Epping Soccer Stadium
Sun 19 Jul 4:00PM South Melbourne v Green Gully Cavaliers Bob Jane Stadium

Round 19
Fri 24 Jul 8:30PM Oakleigh Cannons v Altona Magic Jack Edwards Reserve
Sat 25 Jul 6:00PM Dandenong Thunder v Richmond George Andrews Reserve
Sun 26 Jul 3:00PM Whittlesea Zebras v Melbourne Knights Epping Soccer Stadium
Sun 26 Jul 3:00PM Sunshine Georgies v Preston Lions To Be Confirmed
Sun 26 Jul 4:00PM South Melbourne v Hume City Bob Jane Stadium
Mon 27 Jul 8:30PM Heidelberg Utd v Green Gully Cavaliers Olympic Park (Village)

Round 20
Fri 31 Jul 8:30PM Oakleigh Cannons v South Melbourne Jack Edwards Reserve
Fri 31 Jul 8:30PM Richmond v Heidelberg Utd Kevin Bartlett Reserve
Sat 1 Aug 4:00PM Green Gully Cavaliers v Hume City Green Gully Reserve
Sat 1 Aug 7:30PM Altona Magic v Whittlesea Zebras Paisley Park Soccer Complex
Sun 2 Aug 3:00PM Preston Lions v Dandenong Thunder BT Connor Reserve
Sun 2 Aug 3:00PM Melbourne Knights v Sunshine Georgies Knights Stadium

Round 21
Fri 7 Aug 8:30PM Oakleigh Cannons v Green Gully Cavaliers Jack Edwards Reserve
Sat 8 Aug 6:00PM Dandenong Thunder v Melbourne Knights George Andrews Res
Sun 9 Aug 3:00PM Whittlesea Zebras v Sunshine Georgies Epping Soccer Stadium
Sun 9 Aug 3:00PM Heidelberg Utd v Preston Lions Olympic Park (Village)
Sun 9 Aug 3:00PM Hume City v Richmond To Be Confirmed
Sun 9 Aug 4:00PM Altona Magic v South Melbourne Paisley Park Soccer Complex

Round 22
Sun 15 Aug 3:00PM Oakleigh Cannons v Hume City Jack Edwards Reserve
Sun 15 Aug 3:00PM South Melbourne v Sunshine Georgies Bob Jane Stadium
Sun 15 Aug 3:00PM Green Gully Cavaliers v Richmond Green Gully Reserve
Sun 15 Aug 3:00PM Heidelberg Utd v Dandenong Thunder Olympic Park (Village)
Sun 15 Aug 3:00PM Preston Lions v Whittlesea Zebras BT Connor Reserve
Sun 15 Aug 3:00PM Melbourne Knights v Altona Magic Knights Stadium

- RECENT VPL CHAMPIONS -

2008 Altona Magic
2007 Preston Lions
2006 South Melbourne
2005 Green Gully Cavaliers
2004 Bulleen Zebras
2003 Green Gully Cavaliers
2002 Preston Lions
2001 Heidelberg United
2000 Green Gully Cavaliers (No finals series)
1999 Green Gully Cavaliers (No finals series)
1998 Bulleen Inter Kings
1997 Altona Magic
1996 Altona Magic
1995 Altona Magic
1994 Preston Lions
1993 Bulleen
1992 North Geelong (1st VPL Grand Final)

Tony Ouliaris
(Heidelberg United)

Felix Rosman
(Oakleigh Cannons)

Dimitri Tsiaras
(Richmond Eagles)

Dean Fak
(Green Gully)

Serdar Pir
(Hume City)

Carl Recchia
(Altona Magic)

Altona Magic with the 2008 VPL prize

MAKE SURE TO GET YOUR COPY OF GOAL! WEEKLY EVERY MONDAY AND BE UP TO DATE WITH ALL THE LATEST VPL WEEKEND ACTION

Craig Elvin
(Melbourne Knights)

Michael Bosevski
(Preston Lions)

Wayne Wallace
(Sunshine Georgies)

Rama Tavsancioglu
(South Melbourne)

Veton Korcari
(Dandenong Thunder)

Ross Antoniadis
(Whittlesea Zebras)

PHILLIP RICCOBENE

ALTONA MAGIC FC

goal! Weekly
FOOTBALL FOCUS

Phillip in action during last season's VPL Grand Final between Altona Magic and Melbourne Knights. Inset: Enjoying the spoils after Magic won 1-0 to be crowned champions of Victoria for 2008.

Photo by John Punshon

FULL NAME:
Phillip James Riccobene
BIRTHPLACE: Melbourne, Altona
BIRTH DATE: 21/07/1987
HEIGHT: 179cm
WEIGHT: 74kg
MARRIED: No
CAR: Holden VX 'S'
OCCUPATION OUTSIDE OF FOOTBALL: Full time Student
NICKNAME: There's way too many.. lol! Philfy, Phila & as the South Americans would say, Phunta!
PREVIOUS CLUBS:
Keilor Park, Green Gully
REPRESENTATIVE HONOURS: School boys & Victorian State teams
CHILDHOOD FOOTBALL HERO: Roberto Baggio
EARLIEST FOOTBALL MEMORY: Buying my first pair of soccer boots, $8 dunlops from Kmart & scoring my first goal playing U8's
FAVOURITE O/S PLAYER:
Steven Gerrard
FAVOURITE FOXTEL CUP PLAYER: Too many to choose from.
FAVOURITE FORMER SOCCEROO: Mehmet Durakovic
FAVOURITE CURRENT SOCCEROO: Tim Cahill
MOST MEMORABLE MATCH AS A PLAYER: Winning the 2008 VPL Grand Final
MOST MEMORABLE MATCH AS A FAN: Australia vs Uruguay
MOST MEMORABLE GOAL YOU'VE SCORED: Scoring the winner (3-2) in U16's Victorian State team.
FUNNIEST MOMENT IN FOOTBALL: Green Gully change rooms
BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT: Reaching 89kgs
WORST INJURY:
Torn Ankle ligaments
MOST DIFFICULT OPPONENT:
At this stage, VPL Grounds.
FAVOURITE AWAY GROUND:
Epping Stadium & Bob Jane
SUPERSTITIONS: N/A
TYPICAL MATCH DAY MEAL:
Mum's Pasta or a Chicken Salad
WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS: Speed, ability to use both feet, versatile
WHAT ARE YOUR WEAKNESSES: Eating, especially after 9pm
FAVOURITE TEAM WHEN GROWING UP: Inter Milan
FAVOURITE OTHER SPORTS:
AFL, Tennis, Golf
FAVOURITE OTHER SPORTSPERSON: Roger Federer
FAVOURITE FOODS:
Way too many to choose from (Pasta Scutta) & Chicken Parma
FAVOURITE ACTOR/ACTRESS:
Al Pacino
HOBBIES: Playing Golf with dad & my brother James, PS3
FAVOURITE HOLIDAY RESORT:
Fiji (Outrigger Lagoon)
FAVOURITE NIGHTSPOT:
Ocean Blue
IDEAL DATE: If it wasn't Jessica Alba, I'd be safe to say my girlfriend.
FAVOURITE TV SHOWS: Simpsons, Las Vegas & Boarder Security
FAVOURITE MUSIC: House
FAVOURITE FILM: Bad Boys I & II
LAST SOCCER SHIRT YOU BOUGHT: Liverpool
FUNNIEST RUMOUR YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT YOURSELF:
Too many to mention
BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON CAREER: My Family & Grandparents.
BIGGEST DRAG IN SOCCER:
Pre-Season
FOOTBALL AMBITION:
To play at the highest level possible.
WHICH PERSON IN THE WORLD WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO MEET? : Martin Lawrence & Will Smith
YOUR TIP FOR THIS YEAR'S FOXTEL CUP:
ALTONA MAGIC BABY!

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SUNSHINE GEORGIES

BACK IN THE BIG TIME!

O'Dell To Return Glory Days To Georgies

2009 looms large as a defining year in the football history of the Sunshine George Cress football club, in the past few seasons we have managed to reach the summit of Victorian football, the Victorian Premier League but has in general failed to establish itself consistently in the competition.

Confidence and expectation of a competitive year are all over the football club, off the field a number of changes and reforms have seen the club begin to pick up positively and on the field Andy O'Dell has worked hard with his football department to mould a team which will be competitive and hold its own in the top league.

Season 2008 was an important season and proved the club can fight its way back from a crisis, history has shown many teams relegated from the premier league to state league one often take a number of seasons to regain their position in the league. The club assembled a coach in Andy O'Dell and a group of players who played with heart, passion and desire for the club, for each other and for the loud group of Sunshine fans who follow their team wherever they may go.

When you look back at it the state league division one last season proved to be one of the best editions of that competition in a long time with some very strong teams all who had designs on those two promotion spots. Well Andy O'Dell and his band of players delivered a season which saw the league championship deservedly claimed. That was then....this is now.

Andy O'Dell will relish the chance to match wits again with the elite breed of football scholars in the VPL whilst simultaneously producing a competitive outfit the fans can be proud of.

2009 will be a season of consolidation on the park and the main aim will be to collect as many points, especially at Chaplin Reserve, to ensure the team is not relegated and isn't in danger of being so. We also hope to play some good football and competitive football. On the field the club has retained a large portion of the squad and again the team will be built around the rock that is Martin John who in my opinion is one of the top goalkeepers in Victorian football. Vasko Trpcevski will add experience and guile to the team and the livewires of Peter Kotsupias and George Papadopolus will ass flair and speed to the team. The team also has retained many of the English players they had from last season.

A great source of pride around the club are emerging young players like David Cini and David Calleja who are loyal club juniors and who are examples to our junior teams that if they work hard there is a pathway to the senior teams at our club. Another positive is that Andy O'Dell is a coach who encourages youth and who will give the young players a go.

There are a number of signing in the pipeline at this stage which will add further experience and potency to our team, which will be announced going forward but one thing is assured that anytime a Sunshine George Cross side takes to the field you will get a passionate team with a passionate coach a group of passionate fans who will challenge most teams in this league.

Georgies fans are all cheers after winning SL1 and clinching promotion back to the VPL

FAST FACTS

Formed 1947

Ground Address
Chaplin Reserve
Anderson Road
Sunshine VIC 3020
Mel: 26 G12

VPL Championships
1 (1977)

President Charlie Borg
Coach Andy O'Dell
Captain Wayne Wallace

Finished last season
State League Division One Champions

Top Scorer in 08
Peter Koutsoupias 7 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes
N/A

***Squad 2009**
Martin John
Wayne Wallace
Mathew Cini
David Calleja
Steven Mancheski
Peter Koutsoupias
George Papadopoulos

**Confirmed at the time of going to press.*

OUTS
Colin Azzopardi (Retired)
Vasko Trpcevski (Retired)

By Reuben Schembri
Photos by Darryl Kennedy

DANDENONG THUNDER

FORECASTS FOR THUNDER AND FAME

Munro Takes Charge Over The Summer

The Premier League's south eastern boundary has proven fluid in recent seasons with short lived outposts coming and going at Frankston , Kingston City and Springvale.

South Dandenong is the latest most easterly point of Premier league activity as new kids on the block Dandenong Thunder, under the direction of new coach Stuart Munro, prepare to fly the flag in a competition dominated by clubs to the north and west of the city.

The club has been able to retain the bulk of last season's promotion winning Division One squad, including experienced Premier League players, Levant Osman, Marcus Stergiopoulos and Joe DiIorio. Dandenong has also picked up experienced keeper Stuart Webster (ex Richmond Eagles) in the off-season.

However as Munro explains, attracting established Premier League players to the club has proven a more difficult proposition. " I've probably missed out on 12-15 players that were the better Premier League players mainly because Dandenong Thunder, don't have a reputation of being a Premier league club. So people are a bit sceptical to join them and we've missed out on quite a number of players. I've actually found it easier to bring in two or three lads from overseas, than it has been trying to get in local players."

Three new signings from the UK include defenders Sam Bailey and Jack Hingert, and left sided attacker James Thomas. Joining them are UK players Colin Quirk and Aaron Wilford who come via State League club Southern Stars.

Munro continues "That's something we can only change by becoming an established Premier League team in the next two or three years. If you can do that, then we'll start to attract the better players. In the meantime we've still got to be competitive.We've still got to try and do as well as we can, because Dandenong supporters are quite passionate and they want to see their team challenging."

Munro has also recruited players that have been on the fringe of other clubs in the Premier League, such as Hamlet Armenian and Shane Rexhepi" who have the hunger now to try and establish themselves as Premier league players with us and if they can do that, we'll benefit from that. So there's a lot of them of a similar sort of age in their early 20's, alongside very experienced players such as Osman, Webster and Stergiopoulos who will help the young players improve."

Thunders' arrival in the VPL coincides with the start of a streamlined competition involving 12 teams, two less than last season. It will arguably be a tougher competition as Munro explains, "It makes it a little bit more cut throat. Probably be very few meaningless games because the league is smaller and four less games to pick up points to be successful or to avoid the dangers of relegation."

Certainly the new boys can expect a baptism of fire in the opening rounds of the season. Their schedule takes them out on the road in the first three rounds to South Melbourne, Oakleigh Cannons and Green gully, before having the chance to play in front of their new grandstand in round four when they host reigning champions Altona Magic.

Munro says he'll know more about the potential of this group of players after the first four or five games. " Even myself, I don't know how some of these new players are going to adapt. If they're not as good as we're thinking, hopefully we can be competitive and finish mid-table… Certainly we'll be competitive at the very least. But we'll set our ambition once we start to see how the players settle together. It will probably take four or five games."

FAST FACTS

Formed 1972

Ground Address
George Andrews Reserve
Trewin Street, Dandenong South
Mel: 90 D11

VPL Championships
None

President Driton Maliku
Coach Stuart Munro
Captain TBC

Finished last season
Division One Runner-up

Top Scorer in 08
Ryan Davidson 11 goals

Most Gold Medal Votes
N/A

Squad 2009
Yiha Dimasi
Levant Osman
Mentor Memeti
Benji Vahid,
Marcus Stergiopoulos
Fitim Ibraimi
Ryan Davidson
Ibraim Ibraimi
Mohamed Alkasaran
Veton Korcari
Joey Di Iorio
Denis Ukalovski
Ivan Klarica
Xhezair Sulemani
Stuart Webster (Richmond)
Shane Rexhepi (Richmond)
Jack Hingert (Peterbourough UK)
Sam Bailey(Westchester Flames USA)
Colin Quirk (Southern Stars)
Aron Wilford (Southern Stars)
Hamlet Armenian (South Melbourne)
Rinor Muriqi (Melbourne Knights)
Shaqir Elmazi (Oakleigh Cannons)
Mark Burton (AE Prats Spain)
Afrim Avdulai (KF Sloga Macedonia)
Onur Ilci (Turkish Premiere League)
James Thomas (UK)

Experienced defender Marcus Stergiopoulos will be organising the backline for the Thunder in '09.

Football fans can look forward to watching Former Young Socceroo Joey Di Iorio will be terrorising defenders with his unpredictable and mazy runs.

By George Stogiannou
Photos by John Punshon

FOXTEL CUP
The Victorian Football Show
Every Wednesday C31 8pm

The Green Gully Football Show
Every Saturday C31 10.30am

FOX SPORTS

Champions League
Wednesday 25 February
Arsenal v Roma 6.45 am LIVE SBS
Inter Milan v Man U 6.45 am LIVE ESPN
Arsenal v Roma 8.45 am DELAY ESPN
Lyon v Barcelona 1.00 pm DELAY ESPN

Thursday 26 February
Chelsea v Juventus 6.45 am LIVE SBS
Real Madrid v Liverpool 6.45 am LIVE ESPN
Chelsea v Juventus 8.45 am DELAY ESPN
Villareal v Panathinaikos 2.00 pm DELAY ESPN

EPL
Tues Feb 24 **Hull v Tottenham** 6.55 am Fox Sports 3
Sat Feb 28 **Everton v West Brom** 11.40 pm Fox Sports 2
Sun Mar 1 **Chelsea v Wigan** 1.55 am Fox Sports 2
Sun Mar 1 **Arsenal v Fulham** 1.55 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 1 **Middlesbrough v Liverpool** 1.55 am Viewers Choice
Sun Mar 1 **West Ham v Manchester City** 11.25 pm Fox Sports 1

Monday 2 March Carling Cup Final
Tottenham v Manchester United
Kick-Off at 2.00 am EDT Fox Sports 1

SETANTA SPORTS

Monday 23rd February
5:15am Ligue 1 **Nice vs Rennes**
7:00am Ligue 1 **Lille vs Monaco** LIVE
2:00pm Serie A **Napoli vs Genoa**
3:45pm **De Graafschap vs Feyenoord**
11:45pm MUTV: EPL **Man Utd vs Blackburn**

Tuesday 24th February
2:30pm Bundesliga **VFB Stuttgart vs Hoffenheim**
11:55pm Chelsea TV: EPL **Aston Villa vs Chelsea**

Thursday 26th February
6:45am FA Cup 5th Round **Middlesborough vs West Ham** LIVE
12:00pm Copa Libertadores **Gremio vs Universidad de Chile** LIVE

Friday 27th February
6:00am FA Cup 5th Round **Hull City vs Sheffield Utd** LIVE
10:00am UEFA Cup **St Etienne vs Olympiacos**
12:30am UEFA Cup **Galatasaray vs Bordeaux**
3:00pm MUTV: UCL **Inter Milan vs Man Utd**

Saturday 28th February
0:45pm UEFA Cup **Udinese vs Lech Poznan**
3:15am CHTV: UCL **Chelsea vs Juventus**
2:00pm Barca TV: UCL **Lyon vs Barca**
3:45pm Bundesliga **Cologne vs Armenia Bielefeld**

Sunday 1st March
7:00am Ligue 1 **Auxerre vs Toulouse** LIVE
10:30pm Eredivisie **Utrecht vs Ajax** LIVE

Monday 2nd March
1:00am Serie A **Sampdoria vs AC Milan** LIVE
3:00am Bundesliga **Werder Bremen vs Bayern Munich** LIVE
7:00am Ligue 1 **Lyon vs Rennes** LIVE
1:45pm Serie A **Reggina vs Fiorentina**

RECORD NOVAK MOVE

Knights Left To Rue The One That Got Away

LEE Novak, the 20-year-old striker who trained with Melbourne Knights last season before rushing back to England to be at his sick father's bedside, has transferred from title-chasing Blue Square North outfit Gateshead to League One outfit Huddersfield for £105,000.

The switch took place on the final day of the UK transfer window and is a record for northeastern English non-league football.

The deal was clinched after Huddersfield Town manager Lee Clark and assistant Terry McDermott had run the rule over the in-demand Novak, who had hit 17 goals in 17 games this season to surge to the head of the Blue Square North goalscoring charts.

Huddersfield's League One rivals Scunthorpe United had a £90,000 bid turned down while Peterborough United, who were the first club to inquire about Novak, failed in a last-minute bid to clinch the frontman's signature.

When Goal! Weekly wrote exclusively last season of Melbourne Knights' interest in Novak we said that the Croatian-backed outfit could be set to trump a number of English League clubs but this was not to be.

"He looks a good player and we were happy with what we saw in that one training session," said Knights' coach Chris Taylor at the time, no doubt curbing his enthusiasm so as not to alert rival Foxtel Cup clubs to Novak's class.

Lee Novak – almost joined Melbourne Knights last season.

However, despite Knights' best endeavours, Novak stayed in England and switched from Newcastle Blue Star to Gateshead last September.

The switch to Huddersfield is a tremendous deal for Gateshead, who paid a mere £3500 to Newcastle Blue Star plus a player exchange, particularly as Huddersfield will allow Novak to see out the season at Gateshead.

Blue Star's surprise decision to offload a player of such potential has been a costly error, though the Kingston Park club will gain some consolation thanks to a 10% sell-on clause.

Novak acknowledges his move to Gateshead has proved to be a launching pad for what should be a long career in the professional game.

"Joining Gateshead has turned out to be a dream move and while I never got the chance to speak to Scunthorpe because their bid was rejected, I'm delighted to be joining Huddersfield Town," he said.

"They've got a Premiership set-up. I didn't expect to be given a three-and-a-half year contract and while it took three hours to get to Huddersfield in the snow it took no time to agree terms.

"They are a big club with a proud tradition and I can't wait to get cracking when pre-season begins in July – but before that I've got a job to do at Gateshead."

Gateshead chairman Graham Wood, who has masterminded his home town club's renaissance, believes the record-breaking transfer has been to the benefit of all parties.

"It's a win–win situation," said Wood. "We've got a good fee for a talented young player who we can keep for the rest of the season, and Huddersfield have a star in the making."

— CRAIG MACKENZIE

CAMPBELL'S KIDS SHINE

Another Tour Of Scotland Planned

FORMER South Melbourne Hellas star George Campbell completed a successful tour of Scotland over the Christmas period with young Victorian footballers.

Campbell spent time in his native Lochaber district in the West Highlands after taking the Melbourne Football Stars squad around Scotland to play mainly against Premier League competition.

Early in December, Campbell's 18-strong squad faced up to Celtic, Rangers, Hearts, Hibs and Campbell's former club Aberdeen, beating Hibs 3–1 and losing 3–0 to Rangers in the process.

While the squad flew back to Melbourne in December, Campbell and son Daniel stayed on for an extended holiday with Campbell's mum in Caol while his sister lives next door.

Former South Melbourne Hellas star George Campbell (right) with sister Isa and son Daniel in Fort William last Christmas.

Another tour is in the pipeline later this year after the success of last year's trip.

"I've been meaning to do this for years as I've always wanted to put something back into the game," said Campbell.

"I brought the kids across to Scotland to see what it's like to play at the top level. This provides another pathway to professional football.

"I wanted to benchmark our standards in Australia with the game in Scotland and there's little real difference at this age."

Campbell left Caol for Aberdeen Football Club when just 15 years old after starring with Kilmallie Youth Club and his ambition paid off when he became the youngest ever player to pull on a Dons' shirt, aged just 16 years and eight months.

A six-career followed before he left Scotland for good to take up a contract with Hellas in 1978.

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MacKenzie At Large

An Occasional Offering from Craig MacKenzie

A little bit of horseplay

THE last time I heard the immortal words "A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!" was when Prince Charles exchanged marriage vows with Camilla Parker Bowles.

That was until last weekend when it was revealed that Mornington was close to trumping Bentleigh Greens and Casey Comets in the race to sign former Frankston Pines custodian Brad Zealley.

Apparently this information is not common knowledge so for goodness sake keep it to yourselves, but I understand that the attraction of playing for Provisional One title contender Mornington as opposed to strutting your stuff in State One or State Two centres around a partnership in a racehorse.

Which kind of annoys the Comets as Zealley had been training with them and given that Cranbourne racecourse is a stone's throw from Comets Stadium maybe the club could have arranged to whet Zealley's appetite for things equine by arranging for him to ride trackwork – more likely on a Shetland pony rather than an expensive thoroughbred.

Nevertheless, last season's Provisional Two South East champ Mornington expects big things this season and senior coach Adam Jamieson, who took Pines into Premier League in 2007, has every reason to be confident.

Jamieson already can call on the strike power of Nick Waite, the attacking midfield nous of Jamie Paterson (ex-Dandy Thunder and Casey Comets), experienced stopper Michael Anderson (ex-AIS, Morwell Falcons and Frankston Pines) and central midfielder Leo Trebbia, but wants to add 22-year-old stopper Chris McKenna (ex-Comets) and Zealley to his line-up.

Jamieson also is on the lookout for another striker and is confident that if his squad can stay fit and healthy then promotion to State League ranks is a distinct possibility.

"Chris (McKenna) may give the game away which would be a real shame as he has so much to offer and I'm very keen to sign him, but with the squad we're putting together I'd be surprised if many teams could compete with us," said Jamieson.

"The club wants to go places. It's disappointed when it sees players in its under-14 and under-15 Super League sides go to clubs in higher divisions and it realises that we need to have a stronger senior club in a higher league to provide these youngsters with a platform for their talents."

Last season Goal! Weekly successfully predicted that Nunawading would win promotion from Provisional One to State Three so we're out to make it two in a row and we're tipping that Mornington will be right up there at the business end of the 2009 season.

Everything's fine and Dandy

IT'S just as well that Bill Matotek doesn't suffer from vertigo. The president of Dandenong City will administer a club that, in part, has jumped four divisions in a few short months and wants to go even higher.

Late last year Football Federation Victoria ratified the merger between Chelsea and Dandenong City and the new entity will play its home games at the Frank Holohan Soccer Complex in Endeavour Hills.

Dandenong City, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2005, played in Provisional Three in 2008 but has taken Chelsea's State Two spot for the coming season.

The senior coach is former Dandenong Thunder and Chelsea mentor Toby Paterson and he plans to have his men hit the ground running.

Former Dandenong Thunder, Cranbourne and Doncaster Rovers striker Fikret Korkaric, is training with Dandenong and Paterson is keen to clinch his signature.

"Fikret's an experienced player and I really need to sign a recognised striker," said Paterson. "But Fikret's got another couple of clubs chasing him so we'll just have to see how things pan out."

Paterson is looking forward to getting a full season from central defender David Rajher who has made a complete recovery from a knee injury and the club also has signed ex-Dandenong Thunder and Langwarrin striker Ali Memedovski.

Former Hearts, Rangers and Scotland defender Dave McPherson, now a respected player agent, recommended a couple of UK-based players to Paterson who is still weighing up whether or not to bring them over, albeit that he has played a pivotal role in successfully recruiting quite a few visa players in recent seasons.

"I've spoken to a couple of players overseas but there's a lot to consider when you bring them over here. There's a lot of adjustment for them to make and a lot of work involved in bringing them out."

Joseph Rajher is assistant senior coach and

Mick Conroy has been appointed director of youth football, a task he combines with looking after the reserve squad.

Off the field the club is on a sound footing thanks to major sponsors VPI Versatile Precast Industries, I & D Constructions Pty Ltd and Rabot Paving Australia.

Doves have seen the light

PROVISIONAL One outfit Doveton, relegated from State Three South-East last season and now under the coaching guidance of Jim Morrison, has signed big Alex Rae from Seaford.

I understand that a delicate and protracted period of negotiation had reached an impasse last Thursday night before a deal eventually was struck and when asked about the 'transfer fee' involved Rae said: "I had to give Seaford back their socks."

The former Maccabi Hakoah, Mordialloc, Caulfield City, Waverley City, Sandringham City, Springvale City, Cranbourne, Chelsea, Frankston Strikers and Seaford defender (just hold on till I get my breath back) joins Mark Chaplin (signed from Warragul United, which Morrison coached last season).

The Doves are hopeful of signing Langwarrin's legendary striker Greg Kilner as well as former Langy and Frankston Strikers midfielder Damien Nadjer.

And it's rumoured that the Waratah Reserve outfit is one of many in the hunt for Trent Malcolm from Frankston Pines.

Former National League star Brian MacNicol, who played with Doveton last season, is training with Frankston Strikers.

O'Halloran at the helm

TOMMY O'Halloran had no illusions about what lay in store when taking on the job of senior coach of Frankston Pines for 2009.

The former Australian schoolboy international has been quietly building a reputation as a developmental coach with Pines' under-18 and reserves sides in recent seasons and now faces up to assembling a senior squad decimated by player departures.

He's been to more clubs than Paris Hilton but maybe it's 11th time lucky for Alex Rae who will strut his stuff with Doveton this season. Photo: DARRYL KENNEDY.

From the squad that started season 2008 just two players remain – Andy Skledar and Matt Morris-Thomas – but O'Halloran remains positive. "We'll be competitive. Don't worry about that," he said.

Former Langwarrin and Sandringham City defender Niall Mitten is training with Pines and midfielder/forward Chris Aldonato, ex-Bulleen, Sandringham and Bentleigh Greens, is expected to start training at Monterey Reserve this week.

O'Halloran is delighted to have retained goalkeeper Gary Pinter who made four senior Premier League appearances last season while Gary Davidson, a defensive midfielder from Berwick City and a former Pines player, has been training strongly as has promising teenage striking prospect Adrian Chila from Kingston City.

It remains a big if but if Pines can clinch the signature of former player Simon Webster, currently negotiating with Springvale White Eagles, then it will be a major coup for O'Halloran and could lead to other important signings.

The off-field shemozzle that engulfed the club in yet another financial crisis last year led to the postponement of the annual general meeting which eventually was held in late November.

Long-time club member Diane Morris-Thomas was elected unopposed as club president at that AGM along with five other women who fill almost all the executive positions on the committee. Morris-Thomas is the first female president in the club's 43-year history.

'Blas' is back (not for long)

NEW Langwarrin goalkeeping coach Peter Blasby made a stunning comeback to top-flight football the other week deputising for injured keeper Chris Jones at Springvale White Eagles' pre-season tournament.

When 57-year-old Blasby replaced Jones about halfway through the first half of Langy's practice match against newly promoted State One rivals Pascoe Vale the score was 0–0 and when Blasby finally trudged off the park redder than a beetroot (due to a combination of sunburn and high blood pressure) Langy had been trounced 3–0.

When asked to describe Blasby's participation in Pascoe Vale's opening goal, Langy 'coaching adviser' (there are quite a few down there by the way), Eddie Donald, was straight to the point. "The Titanic went down quicker," said Donald.

But that blunt assessment could not detract from Blasby's excellent second-half performance culminating in two fine one-on-one saves when he spread himself superbly (okay, fell to the ground well) to rein in what could have been an embarrassing scoreline.

It was a different matter last Thursday night when a competitive Langy earned a 1–1 draw with newly promoted Premier League outfit Dandenong Thunder.

While on the subject of Langwarrin, senior coach Gus Macleod flew to Sydney last week to attend a Football Federation Australia coaching conference and next week we'll update you on the three-day event.

Comeback King: New Langy goalkeeping coach Peter Blasby catches up with another living legend, Steve Blair at the "World of Soccer" store in Dandenong not too ong ago.

BOO'S WORLD

With Mark Boric

The stage is set for another Melbourne Victory v Adelaide United A-League Grand Final in the Docklands. With Melbourne having won the five matches between the clubs this season, you wouldn't think Grant Brebner would be betting against them in this one.

Adelaide United coach Aurelio Vidmar has already stated he will park a bus (he got the keys from Pim Verbeek) across the goal-line, but that theory didn't work when they had Big Daniel Beltrame in goal and is unlikely to now.

When the prospect of an Aussie playing in the Superbowl was seized upon by the media, it may have been the catalyst for Grant Brebner leaving Melbourne Victory. For like Ben Graham and Sav Rocca, he too has dreams of making it as a punter in America. Sadly Las Vegas does not have an NFL franchise.

Now it may seem that I spent the entire Goal! Weekly off-season working on Grant Brebner jokes, but that accounts for just three weeks. Early on I came across The Argus On-line Archive at Australian Newspapers Beta (http://ndpbeta.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/home). Typing "football" into the search box brings up plenty of articles on Aussie Rules, and best results are found by trying "soccer" or "British Association" as the game was referred to back in the day.

The accompanying photo was found in the August 19, 1929 edition of the now defunct The Argus. It shows players walking through the tunnel of "The Motordome" for a Dockerty Cup clash, in a very gladatorial manner. The Motordome was a venue near the site of the present Olympic Park, owned by the infamous businessman John Wren. Football could be played on the oval in the middle, but it's primary use was for motorsport and cycling, held on the steeply inclined concrete race track which these players are walking through a subway to pass under.

The On-line Argus Archive reveals that racing cars on a small, steeply inclined track in the 1920's was a dangerous thing, and accidents resulting in death were commonplace. It was the home of the Dockerty Cup Final and state team games for many years until it was knocked down and replaced by Olympic Park.

Now it is Olympic Park which is set to disappear from the Melbourne sporting landscape. It will be transformed into a training ground for the Collingwood Football Club (of whom John Wren was a great benefactor to) with the athletics community set to be relocated to South Melbourne FC's Bob Jane Stadium. Almost coming full circle, Bob Jane Stadium was built when the development of facilities for the Melbourne Formula One Grand Prix saw the nearby Middle Park Stadium demolished. So the two spiritual homes of Victorian football (Olympic and Middle Parks) share a history intertwined with athletics and motorsport.

For those that don't know much about John Wren, he rose from the Collingwood slums of the late 1800's to become one of Australia's richest men. In a time when, say a footballer like Grant Brebner could only legally have a bet on the actual racecourse, he established a totalisator where the working classes could have a punt during the day. This was illegal at the time, but eventually his wealth grew to the stage where he was able to branch out into stadium ownership, with racecourses (one in Richmond, not too far away from Kevin Bartlett Reserve), the Motordome and West Melbourne Stadium (boxing and wrestling). He also dabbled in politics.

Aurelio Vidmar is sick of politics, with jelousy and hidden agendas holding back the pissant town of Adelaide from ever winning anything in the A-League or Asia. It was a great spray two weeks ago, and I doubt he could top it even if they were to lose by a similar margin this week. I wouldn't bet on it, but maybe Grant Brebner would.

SOCCER SILHOUETTES.

To enter the arena at the Motordrome it is necessary to pass through a subway beneath the racing track. These four players in the Dockerty Cup soccer match on Saturday between St. Kilda and the Melbourne Caledonians were silhouetted against the sky line as they entered the subway.

KATSA'S KORNER

With George Katsamboukas

Season 2009 has snuck up upon us quicker than it takes for me to finish off a bottle of J Walker.

The off season has provided no rest for the many Club Powerbrokers who have been busy recruiting the many pop star players – and the pop stars have been busy placing lay buys at all good G-Star outlets, with the promise that they will collect their lay by's around the end of April, when they receive their first pay packet.

Summer for some means relaxation and improving ones tan.

Not so for Ernie and Co, who have experienced their first happy end for the year, as the Melbourne Victory has secured the A-League Minor Premiership.

Ernie and his Helpers are now plotting on how to secure the big "Happy End", and that is to win the Grand Final against Adelaide United.

But the summer period had also bought headaches for Ernie and co, as a few of his lads decided to have a wee flutter on A-League Games, and they got busted in the process.

Led by Captain Muscat who placed his hard earned on a non Victory game, Brebner decided what is good for the Scotch is good for the Johnny, so he went All In on a Victory game.

Their happy ends were short lived though as the good folk at the betting company decided to advise the FFA of the lad's indiscretions.

Adelaide takes the piss out of the Roar and sets up a potential pisser of a final with Ernie's troops. Hope fully the Grand Final will be pissing down with goals like it was in 2006.

Kevin and Grant, next time you need to involve yourselves with these types of activities that may get you into hot water, use another name- fake ID's are readily available at most Soccer Venues.

Back to Adelaide we go and Aurelio Vidmar gave a new meaning to the term Brain Explosion at his post match press conference after his team were thumped by Ernie's Boys.

Starting from his players, he then gave his committee a pasting, and then moved on to his State.

Contrary to what Aurelio Vidmar tells us, Adelaide is not a "Piss-ant" Town. Katsa has many fond memories of Adelaide form two short trips that he took over there, back in his High School Days. Viva le Rundle Street!

Viddie, the best medicine for a loss is a Pizza and Pasta straight after the match, washed down with a Litre of Coke and 2 W N Fields and avoid all contact with Journalists!

Trust me it has worked for me over the years.

Back to grass roots soccer we go, where the Scorer is looking forward to this years Foxtel Cup Season, as he believes that many wickets will fall.

I tend to agree with him also and as always, Katsa's Korner will report on all the "casualties" along the way.

Grounds are about as dry as an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, and it will be interesting to see if many of these venues will stand up to the demands of the season ahead.

The good folk at the House of Darebin have taken this into account and have scheduled a number of catch up rounds, however one thing that they perhaps neglected when selecting the end of March as the date for season kick off, was that many Clubs do not get access to their ground until April 1 from their local Council.

Short but far from sweet for this, the first edition, until next week

This is Katsa – Just as you've known him.

And remember, One good Dim Sim on a Friday night will set you up for a great weekend.

Coach's Casualty List

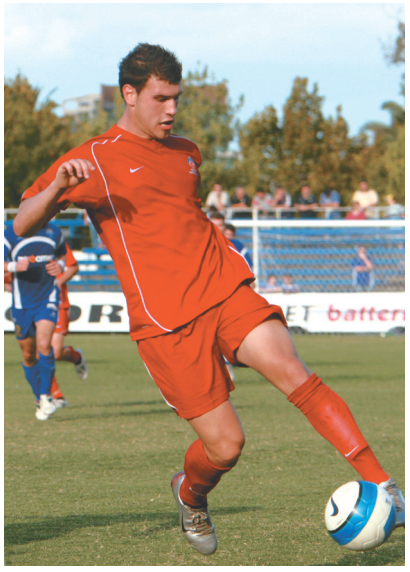
Last Year	This Year
0 - 0	0 - 0
Weeks Outs	Weeks Outs

BRINGING YOU TOMORROW'S NEWS TODAY.

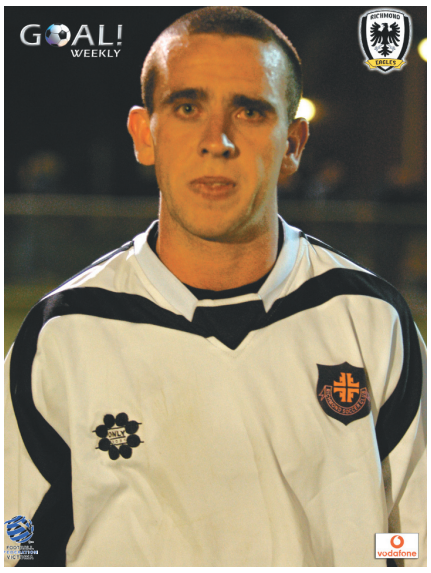
James Holland
(Newcastle Jets from AIS)

Rodrigo Vargas
(Melb Victory from Green Gully)

Steven Pace
(Melb Victory from Preston Lions)



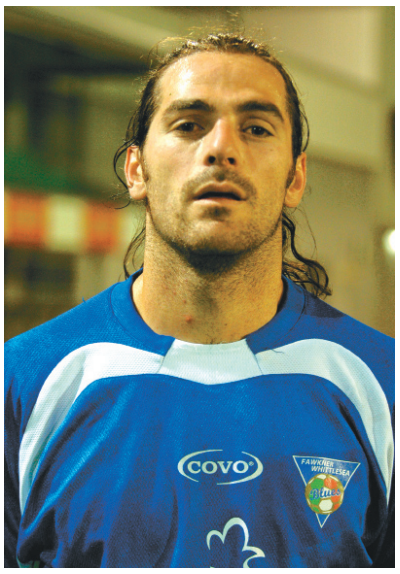
Jason Naidovski
(Newcastle Jets from AIS)



James Robinson
(Melb Victory from Richmond Eagles)

Vaughan Coveny
(Newcastle Jets from South Melb)

Manny Muscat
(W'ton Phoenix from Green Gully)



Sash Ognenovski
(Qld Roar from Fawkner Blues)

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SEASON UNDERWAY IN TASSIE

Three Cup Comps Condition Clubs For Year Ahead

The season has started in Tasmania with three cup competitions in the south, north and north-west of the State.

Three southern teams - South Hobart, Taroona and the Tasmanian Institute of Sport - are competing in the northern Steve Hudson Cup series, in which South Hobart are the holders. They have started off with a win and a draw.

Taroona, who were relegated from the southern Premier League last season, have won their opening two matches.

TIS have one a game and drawn the other in their two outings.

Clarence United have one foot in the Premier League section of the southern Summer Cup final after beating Glenorchy Knights 2-1 in a Group A match at South Hobart this on Saturday.

Clarence top the group with two wins from two outings and just need a draw against bottom side University next week to reach the final.

Strikers Luke Cripps and Ben Hamlett caused Knights headaches galore, while Knights' attacks kept breaking down in the final third.

Jacob Huigsloot headed Clarence in front from Hamlett's cross in the first half, while Cripps headed the second from Hamlett's corner just after the break.

Amadu Koroma pulled a goal back for the Knights two minutes from the end with a powerful header after a great build-up involving Josh Fielding and Cosmos Paite.

In the other Group A match, Kingborough Lions United and University drew 1-1, but the Lions won the marathon penalty shoot-out 10-9 to earn the bonus point.

Matthew Besley gave University a 1-0 lead at the break, but a marvellous strike by Marcus Bremner made it 1-1.

The successful penalty takers for the Lions were: Michael Palmer, Marcello Marchioli, Joel Schuth, Bremner, Brett Andrews, Ryan Bevan, Damien Pearce, Marc Iseli, Tom McDonald and Michael Wells.

Oliver Venettacci, Andy Wilson, Matthew Besley, Brook Teale, James Wilkinson, Johnathon Merry, John Wilson, Joseph Summers and David Procter netted for University, but Mitch Gooch blazed the last spot-kick high over the bar.

South Hobart slipped up in Group B when it was held to a 1-1 draw by Hobart Zebras, but South won the penalty shoot-out 6-5.

Josh Thorpe had a first-half penalty saved by South's Mark Moncur, while Greg Downes put South ahead midway through the second half.

A brilliant strike by Ricky Self made it 1-1, but South twice hit the woodwork before the end - through Matthew Brown and Downes.

In the penalty shoot-out, Jonathon Ladic, Hugh Ludford, Downes, Liam Scott, David Cooper and Josh Heerey all scored for South Hobart, while for Zebras, Thorpe, Aaron Brazendale, Ben Crosswell, Henry Fagg and Andrew Telega were on target.

South Hobart's Gary Upton hit the crossbar with his effort, but Moncur saved from Dwayne Walsh and Daniel Lapolla to give South Hobart victory and the bonus point.

A first-half penalty by Alexander Leszczynski gave New Town Eagles a 1-0 win over Hobart Olympic.

Eagles finished the game with just nine players after Richard DeLara and Chris Wass were both sent off after collecting second yellow cards.

In the opening round this weekend of the north-west pre-season cup, Somerset take on Devonport City and Ulverstone meet Burnie United.

Meanwhile, two of South Hobart and Tasmania's best players have moved to Victoria.

Daniel White has joined Green Gully and Billy Gasparinatos is with Oakleigh Cannons.

By Walter Pless

Photos by Walter Pless

Like Cripps heads home against the Knights

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SOUTH SHINES EARLY

Captures Silverware In Derby Day Hellenic Final

SOUTH Melbourne FC completed 2009 pre-season preparations in the best possible way by defeating rivals Heidelberg United 3-0 in the final of the Hellenic Cup on Saturday afternoon.

Heidelberg had enjoyed a rare period of domination over South in recent years, taking four points off the blues in the 2007 season and then defeating South in both home & away matches in 2008. The Bergers went into the match as reigning Hellenic Cup champions and having beaten Lalor Florina in the North/West semi final. South went into the match on the back of a thrilling 3-2 win over the Oakleigh Cannons in the South/East semi final, with a Vaughan Coveny goal in the last minute of extra time winning the tie for the lakeside club.

Heidelberg began the match the stronger of the two sides, winning several corners but failing to make any use of their dominance. Their best chance came from a low shot from the right that beat South goalkeeper Tomi Tommich at his near post, but luckily the ball hit the side netting and stayed out. Despite starting slowly and nervously, South eventually got into the game and created several opportunities of their own. Gianni De Nittis went close, forcing a good save from Heidelberg's goalkeeper after a lovely cut-back ball from Goran Zoric.

Vaughan Coveny, who will complete a personal milestone of 100 South Melbourne goals if he can score just three goals in the upcoming season, showed his class before half-time when his shot put South into the lead. The ball fell to his feet at the edge of the area and the big Kiwi hit a lovely shot with his left foot, with the ball flying across the face of the Heidelberg goal and into the bottom corner of the far post. The goal was almost identical to the effort that Coveny scored in the previous week against Oakleigh.

From there, South completely dominated the match and should have been 2-0 up before the break, however a combination of poor finishing and good goalkeeping kept the score at just 1-0. That changed shortly after the re-start, when a Bergers foray forward was stopped by South, who quickly surged forward in a counter-attack. An excellent ball played over the Bergers defence found Zoric on the left hand side. With an acre of space to run into, Zoric charged towards goal, dummied the keeper then passed the ball across to the incoming De Nittis, who had the simple task of tapping the ball into the empty net.

With this 2-0 lead, South did not want to make the mistake of slacking off like the previous week, when Oakleigh scored two quick goals to get back into the contest. Fernando De Moraes made sure that would not happen against the Bergers, whilst living up to the saying "saving the best for last" with a goal of high class that killed the game off. Zoric found himself one-on-one with the keeper but his effort was spoiled. The ball fell to De Moraes outside of the penalty area. The Futsalroo had the composure and the time to stop, assess where to place his shot, then hit a beautiful curling effort which sailed into the top far right corner of the net, leaving the Bergers keeper completely rooted to the spot.

Despite the match being over as a contest, South were keen on keeping a clean sheet. Coach Michael Michalakopoulos substituted Tommich for youngster Andrew Sfetkopoulos, giving the ex-Altona Phoenix player time in between the sticks. Heidelberg's only serious chance was a shot that hit the post but apart from that the Bergers were reduced to long-range shooting that was comfortably handled by the South defence.

Zoric was named as player of the match, and captain Rama Tavsancioglu spoke of the trophy "hopefully not being the only trophy that we will win this season." The Hellenic Cup triumph was South's third, after beating Yarraville Glory 2-0 in 1984 and Oakleigh 4-2 on penalties after a 1-1 draw after extra time in 2007.

South's first match is against newly promoted Dandenong Thunder at Bob Jane Stadium on Sunday 1st March, kick-off at 6pm. Supporters are strongly encouraged to come out in force to make sure that the team gets its 50th year underway in style.

By John Kyrou

Photos by Peter Kakalias

THE 2009 Victorian Premier League and Women's Premier League seasons will be officially launched tonight at Young and Jackson's Hotel, a venue which holds great significance for football in this state.

It was125 years ago, almost to the day, a group of "gentlemen" of the Anglo-Australian Association Football Club met here "to make final arrangements for forming football clubs in the various suburbs of Melbourne.

The meeting was success, and it wasn't long before teams like Carlton, South Melbourne, Richmond and Prahran were competing on a regular basis.

This year sees Altona Magic and Box Hill Inter out to defend their championships.

Both were victorious in the grand final of the VPL and WPL respectively in 2008 and are no doubt eager for more success.

The VPL involves 12 clubs this year, many of which are powerhouses of Australian football history. Heidelberg, Preston, Sunshine, Green Gully. South Melbourne and Melbourne Knights have all played at a national level in the NSL. South Melbourne and Melbourne Knights between them have produced well over 50 Socceroos between them.

The blue and whites based at Bob Jane Stadium will also celebrate its 50th year in 2009, as does Preston Lions.

But all clubs in the league, from the oldest participant to the newly promoted Dandenong Thunder, represent important traditions in our game.

The WPL comprises 10 teams, some of which come under the umbrellas of traditional clubs like Heidelberg and Preston, some of which are stand alone clubs like Bendigo Vipers and Casey Comets –but all of which are part of the rapid improvement of the women's game in Victoria and Australia.

We wish all the VPL and WPL clubs the very best of luck this year, an historic occasion marking 125 years of football in this state.

Tony Dunkerley.

FOOTBALL FEDERATION VICTORIA

Tony Dunkerley fielding questions from GW reporters after winning office back in 2007.

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MENS & JUNIORS

THE EARLY HURDLES TO GLORY

Australia's second attempt at World Cup qualification

When we look back on the current attempt at qualifying for the World Cup in South Africa will we remember the near things which have gone the Socceroos way in 2008–09?

A last minute goal against the run of play in Bahrain, a narrow win away to Uzbekistan, a goal-bound shot deflected to safety by a Japanese attacker suggest that the luck has run our way this time. In previous campaigns the dice fell the other way and Australia narrowly failed to qualify. That happened in the lead up to the World Cup in Mexico in 1970 when the Socceroos just missed getting to one of the greatest tournaments of all.

Having failed to prevent North Korea going to England in 1966, Australia embarked on its second World Cup campaign in 1969 in better order. All but one of its nine qualification matches was played overseas, yet it came very close to succeeding. The first stage was a triangular tournament in Seoul involving Japan and South Korea. Australia won its opening game against Japan on 10 October 1969 by three goals to one. Glasgow-born Tommy McColl, who played with Juventus in Adelaide and Melbourne, scored after only five minutes, but the lead only lasted for another six. An own goal restored the Australian advantage just after the hour and the brilliant Ray Baartz got the clinching goal on 69 minutes. Next up came South Korea whose fans erupted into violence when Australia came out on top by two goals to one. John Watkiss scored the first and McColl the second at the death, while the Korean scorer was Lee Lee-woo. McColl scored his third goal in the second match against Japan, which was a one-all draw and Ray Baartz did likewise in the same scoreline in the second encounter with South Korea, though Ron Corry was the real hero with a brilliant save from a penalty. So Australia came out on top with seven points from Korea on six.

The Australian squad for the World Cup qualifiers in 1969. Source: Laurie Schwab, The Socceroos and their opponents.

Now Australia was through to a clash with Rhodesia in Laurenco Marques in Mozambique because of the boycott against playing matches in Rhodesia. Two draws resulted before a three-one win in the third match brought the Socceroos to the last stage before Mexico. The first match was a one-all draw with the inevitable McColl scoring again. The second was scoreless, but in the third match Willie Rutherford scored and forced an own goal and John Warren made it three after Brian Chalmers had pulled one goal back for the Rhodesians.

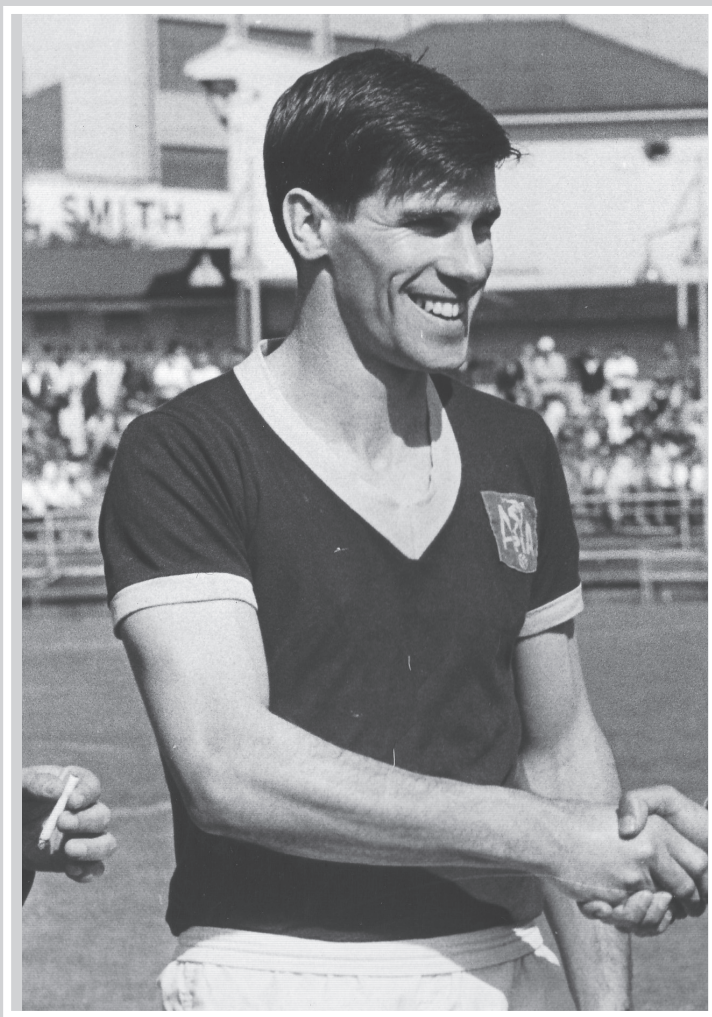
North Korea withdrew rather than play Israel so the latter had only to beat New Zealand to qualify for the final stage, which it did by four-nil and two-nil with both games played in Tel Aviv. Having played in Mozambique on 29 November, the Socceroos had to face Israel on 4 December also in Tel Aviv. Giora Spiegel scored the only goal after 18 minutes, though some have said he forced David Zeman to concede an own goal. Keeper Ron Corry saved another penalty, also from Spiegel. That left Australian needing a victory at home to qualify or force a play-off. At the Sydney Sports Ground on 14 December Australia threw everything it had at the Israelis who were determined to hold their narrow advantage. Tommy McColl was injured and did not play. Ray Baartz and John Watkiss were shackled by Israeli defenders and Atti Abonyi, the best of the attackers could not break through. With only 12 minutes left to play and Australia's defence led by Manfred Schaefer pushing up to try to grab a decisive goal, Spiegel sent a long ball forward and Mordecai Spiegler took advantage of a slip by George Keith to beat Corry. The best response the Socceroos could muster was a Watkiss shot which went through a ruck of players for the equaliser on the night with only three minutes left to play. So the dream of qualification was over once again.

Goalkeeper Ron Corry was outstanding for Australia throughout the qualifying series. He played 33 times in the green and gold between 1967 and 1973, but never better than in 1969. Manfred Schaefer and George Keith were superb defenders and Tommy McColl and Johnny Warren, who led the side apart from when he was injured in Rhodesia, were impressive in attack.

In those days most of the Australian players were only part-timers. Manfred Schaefer worked as a milkman. They were off work for two months during that long qualifying series and losing money as a result. Even so the qualifying series cost the Australian Soccer Federation $18,500. Yet the team came so close, but on the narrow margin of that one-nil away defeat in Israel, Australia missed going to the World Cup in 1970.

Words by Roy Hay

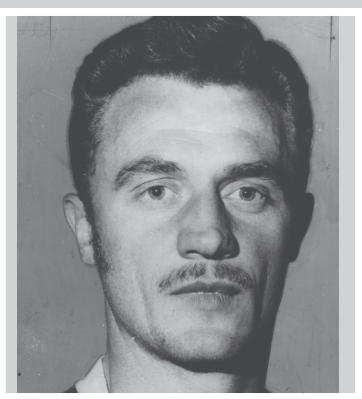
Photos sourced by Roy Hay



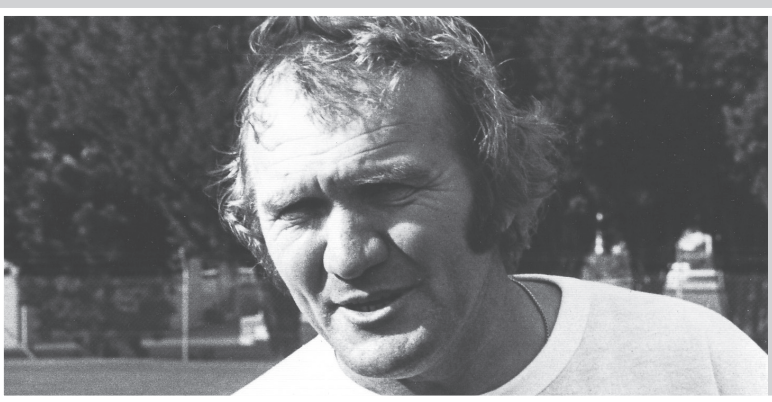
John Watkiss.Photo: Les Brady. Les Shorrock Collection, Deakin University Library.

'Uncle' Joe Vlasits, coach of the 1969 Australian team. Source: Soccer World, 1969.

Ron Corry at full stretch. Source: Sid Grant, Jack Pollard's Soccer Records.



Dave Zeman. Les Shorrock Collection, Deakin University Library.



Manfred Schaefer. Les Shorrock Collection, Deakin University Library.

IT'S A REMATCH!

Shades of '06 As Victory Faces United Yet Again

HERE we go again.
Two years on from its 2006/07 triumph, Melbourne Victory stands on the precipe of winning the coveted A-League title.
Should the Victory prevail this Saturday, they will become the most successful side in the A-League's short history with two titles.
Between it and Australian club football's greatest prize stands rejuvenated arch-enemy Adelaide United.
Would the football gods really have it any other way?
The Victory had the benefit of putting its feet up over the weekend, and was able to watch as United edged an errant Queensland Roar on Saturday night.
Even after its 1-0 win, it is hard to fathom exactly what impact Aurelio Vidmar's astonishing outburst following Melbourne's semi-final shellacking of United on Valentines Day had on his side.
Adelaide might have been fortunate Roar youngster Mitch Nicholls had left his shooting boots at home on Saturday night.
But the result was the desired one, and United has plenty to prove in the decider.
Some of Aurelio Vidmar's selection and tactical decisions in the past month have been poorly judged.
On Saturday night, he got it spot on with his inclusion of midfield scrapper Jonas Salley.
In his first league start since October, the Ivorian was understandably rusty. But alongside the more-polished Paul Reid, he added much-needed tenacity and stability to United's engine room.
He deserved his standing ovation upon his withdrawal with 15 minutes remaining, and should expect another starting berth for the final.
Adelaide has weapons in attacking full-back Scott Jamieson, while captain Travis Dodd impressed with renewed purpose against Queensland.
Fabian Barbiero – returning to the side after being omitted the previous week – showed his shooting prowess with the blockbuster winner.
Where Vidmar does have problems is up front, where both candidates for the lone striker's role are unlikely to put the fear into their Victory opponents.
Vidmar elected to hand Cristiano the chance against the Roar, but he hardly had a sight on goal.
The Brazilian is United's leading scorer this season with eight strikes, but has scored just once this year.
Retiring marquee man Paul Agostino is the other option, but he has not found the back of the net since December 15, 2007.
Also of concern is Vidmar's defence to handle the masterful interplay of Melbourne's midfield, should it be in full flight.
Last time out in the second semi-final, United had no answer. Led by the sublime Carlos Hernandez with support from Billy Celeski, Nick Ward and Tom Pondeljak, Victory simply had its way with Adelaide's beleaguered defenders.
Melbourne will, of course, have the advantage of a vocal home support for the final, and that will count for plenty.
Past results against Adelaide are also in its favour; Melbourne has not lost to

United in five finals meetings and has each of the five encounters this season.
But this is an Adelaide side that, not so long ago, played off in the Asian Champions League final.
Vidmar took a brazen risk by airing the club's dirty laundry in public, but United finished the week by defeating a previously-confident Roar outfit to earn a spot in the A-League grand final.
While the favourite tag rests easily on Victory's shoulders, it should also consider itself warned.

By Paddy Higgs

Photos by Dan Flis & Adam Butler

Melbourne Victory clinched the Premiership Plate and now can look forward to a Grand Final in front of over 50,000 home fans at the Dome.

ADELAIDE UNITED

1 - 0

QLD ROAR

UNITED TURNS NIGHTMARE RUN INTO GRAND FINAL DREAM

Vidmar breathes sigh of relief!

Adelaide United's coach Aurelio Vidmar was finally able to breath a sigh of relief with a 1-0 victory to the Reds over Queensland Roar after what can only be described as a week from hell.

After suffering yet another loss to arch nemesis Melbourne (4-0) Vidmar did himself no favours with his post match conference outburst last week, labelling his hometown of Adelaide as 'pissant' and blaming the club's recent losses on in-house politics and hidden agendas. Considering Vidmar's exemplary behaviour in the past, this comment came as quite a shock to the SA football family but also brought about a feeling of déjà vu regarding The Reds and finals football losses. Despite this uncharacteristic behaviour, Reds owner Nick Bianco and key Board Members stamped their vote of confidence in Vidmar after a crisis meeting and set on their way to rebuild bridges and get Adelaide back on track. However Vidmar didn't get away scott free, incurring the wrath of the FFA with a fine of $2,000 and a suspended sentence with good behaviour.

So the scene was set for a do-or die encounter between the in-form side of Queensland Roar and the embattled Adelaide United, the winner earning a spot in the Hyundai A-League Grand Final and a place in the 2010 AFC Champions League. In front of a small but very vocal crowd of 8,472, the game began at quick pace with the Roar showing Adelaide exactly what they were playing for when in the 7th minute Mitchell Nichols took a shot that Reds keeper Eugene Galekovic comfortably took down low. With Jonas Salley returning from injury to bolster the Reds midfield, it wasn't long before Adelaide had their first chance at scoring, Paul Reid lobbing up a ball at the 20 minute mark for Robert Cornthwaite who wasn't able to get head to ball. Moments later, Captain Travis Dodd gave a great through ball for Christiano after dispossessing Roar's Danny Tiatto, the former being deemed offside. After succumbing to a number of offside traps, Adelaide finally broke through in the 25th minute when Fabian Barbiero capitalised on a Craig Moore clearance attempt, his shot rocketing into the top corner of the goal beating keeper Liam Reddy comprehensively and giving Adelaide a much needed 1-0 lead. The spectacular goal, one of the better in the A-League this season brought a great feeling of pride back into Hindmarsh Stadium. Queensland fought back in the 38th min with Nichols attempting at goal, his shot not strong enough to trouble Reds keeper Eugene Galekovic. Adelaide were playing with confidence, their back four holding strong and their midfield taking on momentum working as a unit, reminiscent of the Asian Champions League performances. Just before the half time break Salley brimming with confidence got onto the end of a shot that just skimmed over the cross bar sending the crowd into cheers of delight.

Within minutes of the second stanza beginning, Adelaide were looking to build on their score, Barbiero again with an opportunity when Reid sent him through, accepting the ball, weaving around the defence this time with only the Roar keeper Liam Reddy to beat, Reddy blocking his attempt strongly. Roar's young gun Michael Zullo was doing all he could for his side, trying to create opportunities with his speed and pace but unable to penetrate the Reds defence. Sasa Ognenovski playing his final match at Hindmarsh Stadium for the Reds was again having a strong influence on the game, as was tall timber Robert Cornthwaite, his header clearances thwarting any chance for the visitors to equalise. In the 56th and 57th minute the Roar stepped up yet again with Matthew Mackay shooting across the face of goal and Nicholls challenging Galekovic without reward.

Serginho Van Dijk then had his chance to become hero only to blast his shot way over the crossbar. Zullo showed some ambition, going out wide but his shot all too easy for the experience of Reds keeper Galekovic. Qld coach Frank Farina brought on Charlie Miller in the 58th minute to inject some more firepower but again United's strong defence of Mullen, Cornthwite, Ognenovski and Jamieson curtailing any chances that were instigated by the Roar's strikeforce.

Fabian Barbiero reels away after scoring a spectacular winner to book Adelaide a Grand Final date with the awaiting Melbourne Victoy. Next Sunday's final will be a re-match of the 2006 contest.

Reds retiring striker Paul Agostino was given a final home send off in the 75th minute as he substituted Brazilian Cristiano with just over 15 minutes remaining while Jonas Salley, also in his final game at Hindmarsh, was given a rousing ovation when he was replaced by newcomer Rostyn Griffiths. With less than 10 minutes to go in the match, Queensland upped the anti, throwing kitchen sinks and all to try to score that elusive equalizing goal to take the game into extra but unable to do so with Charlie Miller twisting and weaving his way around the forward line was finding it difficult to get through Adelaide's defence. Young Nicholls again had a chance to level the scores at the 82nd minute mark, instead skying his opportunity into the heavens. Queensland were now squeezing Adelaide with their mounting pressure, the Reds looking like they were starting to tire as the minutes ticked away. In the dying minutes of the game, unable to penetrate United's midfield, the Roar resorted to bombing long balls into their forwards with those balls going to waste. In the 90+1 minute Miller took a shot at goal that almost found the net, Galekovic falling to the ground with relief. Frustration finally taking its hold with Miller earning a yellow card in the 90+3 minute as he argued against a refereeing decision.

As referee Strebre Delovski blew the final whistle the very vocal home crowd were brought to their feet as they gave United a standing ovation in what was the biggest turnaround of form in the last month, earning their Reds a place in the season decider at the Telstra Dome next weekend, along with a place in the prestigious Asian club tournament in 2010.

It was a very different Vidmar in his post match conference as he admitted it was a huge relief to break the club's finals hoodoo, and said it was exactly the type of performance he was looking for from his team following the two losses to Melbourne in the Semi Finals.

"It was going to live with us until we won a final. Every game in the finals that we play we were one step closer to achieving that and it happened to be tonight. It was a great response from the team tonight. After what's happened in the last couple of weeks, our performances have been certainly well below par and I thought tonight was a good sign of what we've done for the majority of the season so that was extremely pleasing. This was like a grand final for us because it means so much to the club and to our fans and it's an Asian Champions League spot as well which is unbelievable. In terms of our performance over the last couple of weeks, it was certainly a massive step forward for us. We're as good a chance as anyone now," Vidmar said in assessing his side's chances in the Grand Final. "It's a 50-50 game and we've got a lot of work to do in terms of coming back from where we've been with the two Semi Finals against Melbourne and they're certainly hot favourites. They have the edge on us so at least we'll try to keep it under six".

An obviously disappointed Frank Farina was philosophical. "Sometimes the better team on the night doesn't win and I think that was the case tonight. We were beaten by a fantastic strike. Tonight wasn't our night and we didn't take our chances. I don't care about the Grand Final now that we're knocked out, but the bigger prize was missing out on competing in Asia so this is a learning curve for the boys and disappointing."

By Nat Adamopoulos

Photos by Adam Butler

PLAYER RATINGS - AUFC

20. Eugene Galekovic - 6 - Caught out a few times, but overall very solid
2.Robert Cornthwaite - 7 - Good game, made 4-5 crucial clearances with his head
7. Lucas Pantelis - 6 - Down on form, had several good runs and passes
10. Cristiano - 5 - Several opportunities presented but did not capitalise
13. Travis Dodd - 7 - Played a great captain's game, pacey and all over the park
14. Scott Jamieson – 7 - Comeback from ankle injury during week, stood up played like a trooper
15. Gwaye Jonas Salley - 8 - Brilliant game dominated Adelaide's midfield, great comeback
16. Daniel Mullen - 7 - Strong, held backline well, did good job keeping Murdocca quiet
18. Fabian Barbiero - 8 - Wonder goal, brilliant game, hardworking instrumental in Adelaide's win
19. Sasa Ognenovski - 7 - Held defence solidly as per usual
24. Paul Reid - 7 - Some great runs down the middle, effective passes up front

Subs
9. Paul Agostino (75th) - 5 - Farewell performance that lacked form on the park
28. Rostyn Griffiths (78th) – 6 - Got himself into the game good prospect

PLAYER RATINGS - ROAR

1. Liam Reddy - 7 - Did well in close, at times caught out due to lacking defence
2. Andrew Packer -6 - Put in some good hard tackles, but dropped work rate in 2nd half
3. Luke Devere - 6 - Solid game but did need to step up late in game
4. Craig Moore - 6 - Down a little on form, unusually ineffective, needed to stand up more
7. Micheal Zullo - 7 - Gave his all, created some good opportunities to score
8. Massimo Murdocca – 5 - Kept quiet by defence, went missing at times
9. Serginho Van Dijk – 7 - At times promising, needed to establish more influence on game
15. Matthew McKay – 7 - Bulldog like missed his chances to score
17. Mitchell Nichols – 8 - Best on ground, many chances missed, but great commitment
18. Daniel Tiatto – 6 - Down on form, not the same tenacity about him, held back
19. Isaka Cernak – 6 - Had spurts of interest, dropped off as game went on

Subs
10. Charlie Miller (58th) - 7 - Sterling display, threw everything at trying to score
33. Henrique (74th) - 6 - Looked dangerous from the time he came

Game rating: 7/10

Match Details:
Adelaide United FC 1 (Barbiero 25') Queensland Roar 0
Referee: Strebre Delovski Crowd: 8,472 @ Hindmarsh Stadium

Adelaide United line-up: 20.Eugene GALEKOVIC (gk), 2.Robert CORNTHWAITE, 7.Lucas PANTELIS, 10.CRISTIANO (9.Paul AGOSTINO 74'), 13.Travis DODD (c), 14.Scott JAMIESON, 15.Jonas SALLEY (28.Rostyn GRIFFITHS 79') 16.Daniel MULLEN, 18.Fabian BARBIERO, 19.Sasa OGNENOVSKI. 24.Paul REID.

Substitutes not used: 3.ALEMAO, 27.Michael MARRONE, 30.Mark BIRIGHITTI (gk).
Yellow Cards: Nil. Red Cards: Nil.

Queensland Roar line-up: 1.Liam REDDY (gk), 2.Andrew PACKER (33. HENRIQUE 74'), 3.Luke DEVERE, 4.Craig MOORE (c), 7.Michael ZULLO, 8.Massimo MURDOCCA, 9.Sergio VAN DIJK, 15.Matt McKAY, 17.Mitch NICHOLS, 18.Danny TIATTO, 19.Isaka CERNAK (10. Charlie MILLER 58').

Substitutes not used: 6.David DODD, 16.Hyuk-Su SEO, 20.Griffin McMASTER (gk)..
Yellow Cards: Charlie MILLER 90+3'. Red Cards: Nil.

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